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ABSTRACT

This monograph contains papers which suggest means of implementing residential programs, services, and facilities that will help to meet the needs of first-year college students. Fourteen papers are presented and are as follows: "Reflections on the First Year Residential Experience" (John N. Gardner); "The Role of Residential Programs in the Recruitment and Orientation of New Students" (Brenda Rust O'Beirne); "Assigning First-Year Students to College Residence Halls" (Roger A. Ballou); "The Role of Residence Life Programs in Easing the Transition for First-Year Students" (Robert E. Mosier); "Encouraging the Retention and Academic Success of First-Year Students" (Derrell Hart); "Paraprofessional Staff and the First-Year Experience" (Lawrence J. Miltenberger); "Residence Life Programming and the First-Year Experience" (Kim Dude and Shawn Shepherd Hayhurst); "Leadership Education and the Residential First Year" (William J. Zeller); "Residence Life Programs and the First-Year Experience: Personal Safety and Security" (John A. Sautter); "Decision Making and Career Planning as College Success Factors in the Residential First Year" (Michael B. Hoctor and Carol Roberts-Corb); "Promoting Diversity Among New Students in Predominately White Residence Halls" (Lyn Jackson); "The Joys and Sorrows of Moral and Intellectual Maturation" (John M. Whiteley); and "Assessment and Evaluation" (Carolyn J. Palmer). Summary and conclusions are provided by M. Lee Upcraft. References follow papers. (GLR)

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Number 5

The Freshman Year
EXPERIENCE
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INTERNATIONAL

Residence Life Programs

and the First-Year Experience

Association of College and University Housing Officers - International

National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience

HE 024677

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CONTENTS

Foreword 5
William J. Zeller

Introduction: Goals for the First-Year Experience in Residence Halls 6

Reflections on the First-Year Residential Experience 9
John N. Gardner

The Role of Residential Programs in the Recruitment and Orientation of New Students 21
Brenda Rust O'Beirne

Assigning First-Year Students to College Residence Halls 29
Roger A. Ballou

The Role of Residence Life Programs in Easing the Transition for First-Year Students 39
Robert E. Mosier

Encouraging the Retention and Academic Success of First-Year Students 49
Derrell Hart

Paraprofessional Staff and the First-Year Experience 57
Lawrence J. Miltenberger

Residence Life Programming and the First-Year Experience 67
Kim Dude and Shawn Shepherd Hayhurst

Leadership Education and the Residential First Year 83
William J. Zeller

Residence Life Programs and the First-Year Experience: Personal Safety and Security 93
John A. Sautter

Decision Making and Career Planning as College Success Factors in the Residential First Year 101
Michael B. Hoctor and Carol Roberts-Corb

Promoting Diversity Among New Students in Predominantly White Residence Halls 107
Lyn Jakobsen

The Joys and Sorrows of Moral and Intellectual Maturation 121
John M. Whiteley

Assessment and Evaluation 131
Carolyn J. Palmer

Summary and Conclusions 143
M. Lee Upcraft

The Authors 153

Foreword

The publication of this monograph represents a unique collaboration between the Association of College and University Housing Officers - International and the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience. The residential experience is an extremely important component of the support systems new students encounter as they make their transition into the university community. Residence life professionals must intentionally plan and implement programs, services and staffing patterns which will improve first-year students' chances for success and will support their adjustment to the institution. This monograph has been developed to assist residence life professionals in these efforts.

The residential first year begins long before students move into their residence halls each fall. This monograph has been structured to follow the needs and interests of new residence hall students from initial recruitment contacts with them through the end of their first year.

The content of each chapter has been selected to be utilized by all levels of residence hall staff. It is hoped that other student affairs professionals, faculty, and other college and university administrative staff will also find the content to be useful and informative. I believe a central theme of the monograph is that campus partnerships must be developed between residential programs, other pertinent student affairs offices, faculty, and chief administrators in order to address effectively the needs of new students.

As our authors conducted their literature searches, many discovered that their specific chapter contents were original subject areas. We hope this monograph will serve as a catalyst for the development of greater research and publication on the topic of the residential first-year experience.

ACUHO-I has already begun to develop a greater focus toward this topic. In 1990, a task force was appointed to investigate strategies the Association could take to provide greater assistance and direction for member institutions as they strive to address the needs of first-year students. Member institutions of ACUHO-I provide housing for over 1,500,000 students around the world - and a conservative guess would indicate that 40% of them are first-year students. The need to serve effectively these students is obviously great.

This monograph will hopefully provide practical, "user friendly" information to the residence life practitioner who is attempting to address more effectively the needs of new students. The "Goals of the Residential First Year" which are listed in the Introduction were developed to provide overall structure to the monograph and indicate the priorities campuses should address as they develop first-year programs.

I would like to thank formally all of the authors who contributed their time and expertise to the development of this project. Their efforts are sincerely appreciated. I would also like to express my gratitude to John Gardner, Dorothy Fidler, and Betsy Barefoot for their support and guidance as we developed this publication. I would also like to thank the ACUHO-I executive board for their support and vote of confidence. In all, this collaboration has been an enjoyable and professionally rewarding experience.

July, 1991

William J. Zeller
Editor in Chief

Introduction

Goals for the First-Year Experience in College and University Residence Halls

These goals have been formulated to serve as a conceptual foundation to guide residence life professionals in the development of programs for first-year students on American college and university campuses. Chapters within this monograph were written to provide suggested means of implementing these goals to meet the needs of first-year students through residential programs, services, and facilities.

In order to meet effectively the educational, emotional, and personal needs of first-year college students, residence life programs should strive to:

1 Serve as an integral component of the recruitment and orientation of new students

2 Help first-year students make a smooth transition to the university community

3 Provide high quality residential facilities and programs which enhance new student retention and academic success

4 Provide opportunities for informal out-of-class contact between faculty and new students

5 Provide meaningful involvement and leadership opportunities for new students

6 Select, train, and assign professional and paraprofessional staff to address the specific needs of new students

7 Provide social and educational programs which help students fulfill academic and developmental competencies

8 Help students develop interpersonal skills and competencies by promoting positive interactions between roommates and other residential community members

9 Allow students to develop a tolerance and appreciation of individual, cultural, and racial differences

10 Develop a strong sense of community and support for new students within individual living units

11 Educate and heighten sensitivity toward personal safety and security issues among new students

12 Work to create an understanding of the ethos that the university is an interactive community of scholars

13 Assess and measure the impact of the residential first year

Chapter 1

Reflections on the First-Year Residential Experience

John N. Gardner
University of South Carolina

As the title implies, this monograph about the first-year experience on America's approximately 2,000 residential campuses comes as a result of a unique partnership between the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International and the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience at the University of South Carolina. We have a common set of objectives: we wish to design intentionally experiences during the first college year that will increase student learning, satisfaction, retention, and graduation rates.

In this introduction, I would like to share with you some of the themes, concerns, questions, and challenges that were also the subject of my plenary address to the ACUHO-I annual meeting in Athens, Georgia on July 10, 1990. I am persuaded, above all, that you, the readers of this monograph who are housing and student affairs professionals, are playing a vital role in my favorite topic and cause in American higher education, the first-year experience. Of the over one and a half million students we house on America's college campuses, approximately 40% are new students. Through your work, concern, and vision, you have enormous impact on the environments in which they live, study, learn, recreate, and grow.

The Importance of Residence Halls

I intend for this introduction to be a platform for me to share with you some of my perspectives on the relationship between your profession and what has become my profession--enhancing the experience of first-year college students. The first perspective I want to convey is that of respect, respect for the importance of the work you do. Residence halls are important because

- For better or worse, the lifestyles and behaviors therein reflect the values of the larger undergraduate culture.
- They are where students spend more of their time than anywhere else on a residential college campus.
- They represent the environmental context where many students, for the first time, live without mom and dad, with diverse people, without middle class American privacy, in what is perhaps the most intense peer group environment of their lives.
- They are, can be, and should be sanctuaries; that is, environments where students can retreat from the world of more stressed-out adults and reflect, make their own meaning, and find peace, solace, and companionship.
- They may be the first co-educational consensual living environments these young Americans will have experienced outside their nuclear families.
- They make a vital contribution to improving the retention of first-year students. It is well documented that students who live on campus tend to have significantly higher persistence rates.
- They provide captive audiences for important student affairs programming.
- They are the first collegiate environments of significant freedom.
- New student satisfaction with the undergraduate experience is frequently a function of their satisfaction with their initial living experience.
- Some of the relationships that form in the residence halls last for the balance of the students' lives.
- For better or worse, the kind of friendships which develop informally in the college peer group culture in residence

halls encourage either success or failure because we tend to become like the people with whom we live.

My First Year Of College

It is impossible for me to write about my favorite subject, the First-Year Experience, without thinking in terms of my own first college year. But what about yours? What do you remember about that critical year? Did you live in a residence hall? Was your hall the worst residence facility on the campus as was mine at Marietta College - Douglas Putnam Hall, a former chair factory? Did you have a housemother? Were your college and its officials acting *in loco parentis*? Were there separate standards for men and women in terms of conduct, visitation, or curfews? If so, what meaning did you make of that? Did those separate standards contribute to sexist assumptions that you may have carried on to the present? Were your residence halls racially integrated? Mine were not in 1961, three years before the passage of the Civil Rights Act.

Let me convert this into a personal odyssey for you as well as for me. Do you recall in what year you first went to college? Who was President of the United States? Reflect a moment that today's traditional-aged students remember only Presidents Reagan and now Bush. In the first few weeks and months of college, what were your major developmental tasks? Were they academic or non-academic? Do you remember anything you were asked to read or any of the professors who asked you to do this reading? I recall the professors who asked me to read Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*, Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Self Reliance* and David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*.

Suppose you could go back now and write a story for your hometown newspaper after your first semester in college. What would the headline be? Mine would be "Homesick John Gardner Returns to Family and Girlfriend With a 1.6 GPR on Academic Probation." In my first college semester I was totally unclear as to the purpose of college. I found my professors boring. My advisor was hostile and yelled at me. I took classes that I had no aptitude for, and I was more interested in doing what my father wanted me to do than what I might have wanted to do. I had no study habits. I was lonely and homesick. I had no student personnel professionals to look after me. The president and others made predictions of my failure. I struggled to cope with the premature departure of my first roommate, the heavy drinking of a second, and a total lack of privacy. I did not know how to do my laundry, and my peer group included some real losers.

Today's First-Year Students

How is the first year of college for the class of 1995 different on your campus from the way you and I lived it--15, 25, or 35 years ago? How have the students themselves changed, and what new challenges do they present to higher education institutions? First-year students are, in a word more anxious; and the following factors account for some of their anxiety:

- They are living in an era of increasing pessimism coupled with unprecendented materialism and world economic instability.
- They are asking basic questions about their ability to afford a home or manage lives of early debt.
- They are asking whether they will be able to have a stable family and healthy children.
- They are living in an era when sex can kill them.
- They are often feeling pressure from parents to choose practical majors they may not want.

- They are living in a culture that places tremendous emphasis on circumstances over which many of them have no control such as skin color or body size.

- They are living in a historical epoch when there is still the threat of war (in the Middle East) and the possible resumption of the draft.

I hope that you have an intellectually intimate context, such as a first-year student seminar, from which to observe and talk to the new students on your campus. That is why I have taught such a seminar each fall for the past 18 years. I realize that some of you may not have such an opportunity, and this leads me to wonder and question what you really know about the quality of the first-year experience, both in and out of the classroom, and especially in the residence halls. How has your institution changed its policies and programs in response to the needs of new students? Is there campus resistance to such change, and what factors perpetuate this resistance? Your campus, as mine, undoubtedly has its own story to tell in response to these questions. And your story, of course, must center on the residence hall experience.

Residence Halls Today

The current state of residence halls on college campuses is a mirror, a reflection, of the evolution of American higher education. The largest percentage of residence halls were built in the 1960s, when they were cheap to build on low-interest federal loans. Now, they are very expensive to maintain and repair. The faculty who lived in them on many campuses up until World War II are largely absent. Since that time, of course, the value system of the American professoriate has changed dramatically, and faculty members have given up many of the functions they formerly pursued when they literally lived over the store.

Since the turn of the century, an entirely new profession, the field of student affairs, has evolved and has undertaken many duties formerly performed by faculty. Student affairs professionals now assume the primary responsibilities for counseling, disciplining, sponsoring of student activities, as well as supervising and administering residence halls.

In more recent years, we have witnessed the integration of residence halls by race and gender, the latter paralleling the sexual liberation of students and the society at large. The increasing violence and vandalism in American society at large has, of course, found its way into residence halls along with other manifestations of disrespect for personal property and the rights of others. And finally, the end of expansion in American higher education and resulting fiscal pressures have caused residence halls (and you who administer them) to be viewed as campus revenue generators.

Enhancing the First-Year Experience

In my 24 years as faculty member, university administrator, and advocate for first-year students, I have learned a great deal about what seems to be working in American higher education to enhance the first critical college year. I would like to share these observations with you.

- Focusing on first-year students works. Both the students themselves and the institution can be profoundly changed. Many institutions have become much more student-centered, and retention has been enhanced, often in the most unlikely populations. Today's students are making more use of student services, seeking more assistance from advisors, and reporting more satisfaction with the total college experience.

- Presidents can make a difference. They can change the lives of everyone in their institutions by making first-year students a priority, as I learned when mine started University 101 back in

1972 and invited me to join it. You've got to get your president into the residence halls more often.

- Change is possible, but it rarely succeeds when it is mandated. While change can be encouraged and facilitated from the top, it works best when initiated from the ranks of the faculty and student affairs staff. I strongly recommend that institutions have a task force to evaluate the first-year experience.

- There is a great deal of altruism in the higher education professions, and we have great power to influence student development. We just need to own that power and use it intentionally to develop our citizens' lives to their full potential.

- Intentional faculty development programs can improve the quality of teaching. Faculty can be taught teaching skills they didn't learn in graduate school.

- Faculty, student affairs professionals, and students benefit when partnerships are created and maintained. This theme of partnership is the basis for the Freshman Year Experience conferences.

- Students need "basic training" for college. As Ernest Boyer (1987) says in *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America,* We further propose that all colleges offer a short term credit course for new students entitled "The College: Its Values and Traditions." Residence halls are ideal contexts for such basic training.

- Colleges should celebrate the arrival of first-year students in order to develop among students a sense of cohesiveness, community, and importance within the institution. Such celebrations should not include hazing, beanies, and "rat week" such as I experienced at Marietta College. Again, residence halls are ideal focal points for positive celebration.

- Selection of those individuals who greet and work with new students is critical. Particular attention should be given to choosing residence hall staff who are exemplary role models, who are well trained, who are appropriately rewarded, and who want to work with first-year students.

- Relationships between entering college students and employees of the institution are critical and, as much as possible, should not be left to chance. Retention research clearly demonstrates that students who have a significant relationship with at least one employee of the institution are more likely to persist and graduate. My own first-year students, in their papers and journals, tell me that many of these significant others are residence hall staff.

- "First-year student success" is an ever-broadening concept which must include not only academics but also a more holistic approach focusing on success relative to relationships, identity development, career decision making, wellness, and understanding the various purposes of a college education so as to develop a more meaningful philosophy of life.

- Institutions have learned to do things by design rather than to rely on serendipity. As the great American philosopher of education, John Dewey, wrote in 1916, "We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference" (p. 22).

- Not all new students are the same. There are many distinct sub-populations with distinct needs.
- There are no quick fixes for campus problems. Instead, there are a number of slow fixes.
- Institutions can develop a solid first-year experience without an orientation seminar which has been the most widely implemented enhancement program for first-year students.
- It takes more than curriculum change to change new students. We also have to be more intrusive in their living environments.
- We must recognize the importance of checking out our assumptions about new students in a small group context. These students always know their experience better than we do.
- We must realize that new students leave college for all kinds of reasons that are preventable. We have been tolerating attrition that we should not have tolerated because of our academic social Darwinian assumptions.
- Helping first-year students is not primarily a movement of the Young Turks. The primary change agent is often a senior faculty member assisted by a senior student personnel administrator, supported by a senior academic administrator.
- The graduate school model that equates status with one's distance from new students has to be unlearned. Caring for them need not be incompatible with the achievement of status.
- Some of the most unlikely candidates for student success do, in fact, succeed.
- There is an advocate for first-year students on every campus, as we have discovered in our two national "freshman advocate" award campaigns. Many such advocates are found in residence halls.
- Lack of money is no excuse. Institutions can do anything they want to do for new students if they make them a priority.
- There are still not enough rewards for faculty and staff who work with new students. The reward system has run amuck over the past 50 years. We are pressured to emulate the graduate school model, but few of us are equipped to deliver it. This results in frustrated faculty and poorly served students.
- Caring for first-year students is a key to building institutional community because such efforts force us outside the boundaries of our own turf. The willingness to become involved then becomes the litmus test for true concern for all students and is far preferable to student bashing.
- Some of the most important reforms in the first-year experience have been in the form of continuing/extended orientation, developing first-year student seminars, enhancing academic advising--all of these can be, and are, carried out in the residence hall context.

Future Needs For The Residential First Year

One theme for this set of reflections could be "we've come a long way." We certainly have, since my days in the "dormitories" in the 1960s.

But we have a long way to go. So what do we need to fulfill the inherent potential for holistic student development within the context of the residential first-year experience?

- Within the residence life profession, we need to make the experience of first-year students a top priority.

- We need a better integration of academic life into the residence hall experience. We should invite more faculty to come into the residence halls to live, teach, advise, eat, and whatever else we can think of that is socially legitimate. We need more academic advising, tutoring, counseling, library satellites, and computing facilities within residence halls. (See Chapter 5)

- We need to invest more of the monies residence halls generate back into those halls. For too long some of you have been cash cows for our institutions. The result of not maintaining and refurbishing halls could be the "College Can be Killing" syndrome, as documented by a 1978 television program of the same title produced by the University of Illinois. This syndrome is caused by unintentionally depressing institutional living ambiences that contribute to the rise in student suicides.

- We need to provide more incentives for adults to live in the halls, especially families, to create a greater sense of community, family, and multigenerational living in the halls.

- We need to make staff jobs in residence halls more attractive for outstanding undergraduates. The basic problem here is that, in any organization, those who live over or in the store have lower status. Also, because new students have the lowest status conferred upon them, many of you must distance yourselves from them in order to achieve upward mobility in your own profession. So we often use the youngest, least educated, poorest paid staff to work with first-year students. In contrast, working with these students in the residence halls should be a position of distinction and status. In first-year halls, the challenges are greatest, hours are longest, and problems such as vandalism and alcohol abuse the most rampant. This is precisely why the best residence hall staff are needed in these halls.

- Because we know that persistence is greater for students who live on campus, we need to provide more scholarships to assure that opportunity is less a function of socioeconomic status.

- We need to provide more residence halls for single mothers and their children such as those at Texas Women's University, Goddard College, and Chatham College (Mangan, 1990).

- We need more assessment, both qualitative and quantitative, of the impact of the residence hall experience and better dissemination of findings.

- We need to allow students to plan, organize, and control their own activities in the residence halls as much as possible. This will blunt the criticism of Michael Moffatt (1989) in his book *Coming of Age in New Jersey*.

- Residence hall staff need to see themselves as change agents who are primary conduits of the realities of student life to those in authority within the institution.

- We need to offer the option of grouping students in the halls by academic interest; for example, in mathematics and science as in Douglas College at Rutgers.

- There should be programming in every residence hall in America on the following key issues of vital interest to the future of our democracy:

  - The rising tide of racism. We must promote respect and appreciation for diversity to include multiculturalism and gender differences. For example, the University of California, Berkeley, an institution at which there is no ethnic majority, sponsors experiential residential hall workshops to help students increase their own cultural sensitivity and to make them aware of the negative effects of stereotyping.

  - The epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases which have now replaced alcohol and drug addiction as the number one public health enemy on the American college campus. At the University of South Carolina, data from our Student Health Center would suggest that up to 80% of the traditional-aged students are sexually active; and of these, we estimate that 8-12% have some form of sexually transmitted disease.

  - The problem of campus alcoholism. In the absence of sufficient preventive health education programs and pervasive peer pressure, the residence halls are breeding grounds for a future generation of alcoholics. We must use the halls as the context to educate students for responsible alcohol consumption.

  - Leadership. The country craves it, this elusive "L" factor. Every four years the press, the politicians, the voters seek to identify leaders. America's corporations are hungry for leadership as they push the panic button about the decline in quality of workers who will enter the work force in the 1990s. My own *alma mater*, Marietta College, is doing outstanding curricular and co-curricular programming on leadership.

- Residence halls need to be seen as the center, the cornerstone of our efforts to generate campus community. For better or worse, the halls are mirrors of how we treat our students, whether we leave them alone or invest time and resources in them--that is, the time of our best faculty and staff.

- We need to administer residence halls as if our children were going to reside in them. In what kinds of conditions would you want your child living? One parent told me simply, "Quieter!"

- Increasingly, I think that we need to design residence halls around the theme of making transitions, especially the two most critical transitions in college: the transition in, as in the first college year, and the transition out, as in the senior year. We need to teach transition skills by addressing issues in those environments where we truly have the most captive audience.

- We need to use the residence halls as forums for students to talk to each other. Some of my own most powerful learning experiences in college came in those late night bull sessions which were facilitated, thank God, by the absence of television. I want to borrow a concept here from a YMCA camping experience, specifically from Camp Becket-in-the-Berkshires in Massachusetts where I worked in 1970 and where I sent my own son in 1985, 1986, and 1987. At the end of the day, in each cabin of eight campers, came the appointed hour when the campers have the most important learning experience of the day. They sit around the cabin floor in darkness with only a candle lit, and the counselor leads what is called "the cabin chat." This is an opportunity for reflection on the day's events, the sharing of feelings, accomplishments, questions, and concerns. How can you structure the equivalent of "cabin chats" in a collegiate residence hall environment?

- As in everything else we do in higher education, we have to decide whether we are merely going to ape the values of the culture--in this case, the extraordinary emphasis on materialism and creature comforts--or whether we are going to invest our attention and resources to stand for some alternative values. Towards this end, I was distressed to read a recent article in the *Chronicle* entitled "In Buyer's Market, Colleges Turn to Posh Dorms and Fast Food to Lure Students" (Collison, 1989). The article reported that a number of institutions are developing state-of-the-art residence halls with plush carpeting, microwave ovens, Apple computers, cable television, fast food courts with everything from hamburgers to Thai food, and even room service with delivery of food to rooms. I cannot think of anything more likely to bring down on the heads of college housing officials the charge that institutions are spending too much on expensive frills which, in turn, drive up the costs of higher education and siphon money from academic operations. When times get tight and the academic leadership looks for an ox to gore, I do not think housing officers want to give them any excuses. One critic of such practices is the President of York College in Pennsylvania, Robert Iosue, who was quoted as saying, "We should be marketing educational quality, not trying to market materialism" (Collison, 1989, p. A39).

- Above all, we need to make sure that residence halls do not "go to the dogs." Some of you may be aware that, for the past ten years, Eckerd College in Florida has set aside two residence halls where students may live with their pets. Officials are quoted as saying that they have about 40 dogs and cats and an additional 100 caged animals such as hamsters, lizards, and skunks. (The latter must be descented before coming to campus.) The rationale, according to one official, is that "if students grow up with a pet, they shouldn't have to leave it at home. It will probably be better for their emotional stability to let them bring the pet to school" (Collison, 1989, p. A2).

Approximately ten years ago I visited a college in Nebraska where, in order to ease the homesickness encountered by a number of its rural student residents, they were allowed to bring their horses to campus, not to live in the residence halls but in an appropriate stable. All of this suggests how far we have come in responding to students' unique needs! And you good folks appear to be on the cutting edge of that trend.

Conclusion

I want to leave you with several questions--the questions often being more important in life than the answers.

1) In your residence halls how high a priority are the experiences of first-year students?

2) What are you doing for first-year students that you are not doing for other students?

3) What are the strengths and weaknesses of what you are doing for first-year students?

4) How long has it been since you examined or rethought what you are doing special for first-year students?

I urge you to respond to this monograph with a renewed determination to make first-year students a greater priority--to do so in the larger context of the search for institutional community and to do so in partnership with your faculty colleagues.

Whether your first-year students stay in college, how much they learn, with whom they associate, their attitudes toward your institution, and their behavior in later years in your residence halls if they choose to continue living on campus may well be determined by what kind of a priority you make these students in the critical first year.

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Chapter 2

The Role of Residential Programs in the Recruitment and Orientation of New Students

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This chapter addresses the following goals as outlined in the Introduction:

1 Serve as an integral component of the recruitment and orientation of new students

2 Help new students make a smooth transition to the university community

The residential first-year experience begins long before new students arrive on campus in the fall. Residence hall programs should play an integral role in the recruitment and orientation of new students. Prospective students have a great need to find out about where they will be living and what they will be experiencing in their living unit. Early contacts with students allow the university and the residential program to communicate the benefits of living on campus. This chapter serves as an introduction to this process--the very beginning of the residential first-year experience.

Often when contemplating the first year of college, educators visualize the beginning of an academic year: parents and students arriving on campus with bags, boxes, and high expectations, and an academic community ready to challenge students intellectually. In actuality, the first year of college begins long before move-in day; a student's perceptions of the institution are shaped formally or informally by initial contacts with campus representatives. Some of the first questions that students ask concern general academic programs, academic requirements, and basic needs such as food and housing.

An institution and its representatives create initial impressions that play an important role in the ultimate decisions of prospective students. Because practical concerns as well as personal preferences are incorporated early in an individual's decision-making process, these issues must be approached through recruitment, admissions, and orientation. Offices of residence life and new student services (often called orientation), in addition to admissions offices, must be involved directly in initial stages of recruitment and assimilation with the institution. Residence life personnel have the potential for involvement in two significant transitional phases: recruitment and preenrollment orientation programs. A brief review of literature regarding campus climate and new student needs and expectations will provide the context and recommendations for such involvement.

Collaborative Efforts: Recruiting Students to Become Part of a New Environment

First-year college students often have difficulty articulating all of their hopes, fears, and expectations. Despite the number of theories available to structure our thinking about student development (Sanford, 1962; Chickering, 1969; Perry, 1970; Gilligan, 1982; Erikson, 1968; Cross, 1981), students themselves are most interested in practical questions and answers especially early in the transition from high school to college. As Maslow's (1954) hierarchy would suggest, attending to basic security needs is essential and primary. The sense of security is more fully developed once a student's room becomes "home," and even in the recruitment process students need to see evidence that the campus can become a comfortable home-away-from-home.

Printed materials as well as individual assistance during campus visits provide much of this information throughout the recruitment stage. Informal snapshots in and out of the classroom portray the climate of the campus. The diversity of programs and people, the attractiveness of the physical surroundings, and the availability of options need to be communicated assertively and honestly in the recruitment process.

An institution's climate, as well as its characteristics, exert a powerful influence on new students (Banning, 1978). Campus ecology, with roots in Lewin's (1936) theory, refers to the study of the relationship between students and their campus environment. Upcraft (1985) suggests several environmental conditions that have positive effects on student success: high interaction among students, strong faculty-student contact, availability of on-campus housing, and opportunities for extracurricular involvement. From another perspective, Blocher (1978) identifies three subsystems which are essential to student success: an opportunity structure that promotes personal growth and development, a support structure of necessary resources, and a reward structure which offers reinforcement. New students make an "ecological transition" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and it is the task of the institution to assist with the process of this transition.

The availability of on-campus housing for new students must be addressed by all institutions before student recruitment begins. Institutions must carefully review existing practices and potential changes. Is priority given to first-year students? How does the assignment process work? What are the options available to new students? How are those alternatives communicated? How inviting are the programs and buildings? Do the institutional materials (applications, brochures, etc.) reflect the facilities and programs available in the residence halls favorably and realistically? Is there a way to design sub-environments that may be attractive to first-year students (or subgroups of students)? The ecological perspective focuses on congruence and responsiveness of environments, rather than changing the students to fit those environments.

In an age of consumerism, institutions must know what they are "selling;" the same is true for residence halls. Administrators must make deliberate decisions regarding housing options, review these decisions regularly, and then communicate them to prospective students. Upcraft (1985) concludes that first-year students should be assigned by academic major, according to academic ability, in coeducational residence halls, with upper-level students, in a setting that is not overcrowded, and with roommates who fit selected criteria. Student needs, interests, and input should be considered and incorporated in the decision-making process. Everyone involved in the admissions process must articulate and understand the rationale for these approaches during the recruitment process and beyond.

It is not uncommon for representative committees to work with the development and implementation of orientation programs. Similar collaborative efforts may enhance the recruitment process as well. What was once perceived as the work of only the admissions office must now be a mission shared by numerous departments. Staff members from residential living units have much to contribute to the recruiting process. Their familiarity with student needs, developmental tasks, and campus climate contributes to the work of such a committee. When recruitment becomes a shared concern, the institution as well as specific departments benefit. This active involvement may be requested or encouraged by admissions personnel; if not, residence life professionals should advocate the value of collaborative efforts.

Educators who work in residence hall systems know there is substantial evidence that first-year students who live in residence halls are more likely to succeed than those who live elsewhere (Astin, 1973). As potential new students clarify their expectations during the pre-admissions process, they can be educated about the ways in which residence halls promote personal development.

National residence hall and housing associations recognize exemplary residence life programs each year, and it is important to share any such recognition with new students and their parents during the recruiting process. The building of expectations, standards of excellence, and commitment to the campus community can begin early in the student's search process. Upper-level students can help to solidify these perceptions. The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater offers Friday On-Campus Days for prospective students and parents. The programs are presented by campus assistants, upper-level students who live in the residence halls and provide extensive information about the campus programs and services. The University of Michigan offers a similar program, but only for admitted students and their families. Whether through formal or informal programs, residence life staff members are in positions to help students, faculty, and staff contemplate critical questions about college early in the recruitment process.

When first-year students ask questions about entering a college or university, roommate issues are usually near the top of the list. Early in the recruitment process, admissions officers hear and respond to basic concerns of new students. Ideally, with the active involvement of residence life staff in the recruitment process, those anxieties and specific questions can be approached directly.

In addition to information-sharing done in person or by way of printed materials, students and parents form perceptions through informal contacts with residents, participation in summer camps or conferences held in the residence halls, on-campus visits, weekend "siblings programs," and personal observations of the cleanliness and reputation of the facilities. A strong institutional commitment and the support and collaboration of faculty, staff, and students are needed to keep these priorities in perspective throughout the year rather than just during the recruiting season.

Ernest Boyer (1987) suggests that there are a number of national concerns that must be addressed by institutions of higher education. Some of these national imperatives—strengthening links between secondary schools and universities, and strengthening campus community and connections within the university—relate directly to the recruitment and orientation processes.

The active engagement of residence life professionals in the recruitment of new students may require a significant shift in the way they think about the process. It means more than putting together a brochure or application packet that reflects the services available in the residence halls. Such coordination requires mutual understanding between and among campus offices and a willingness to integrate and share in the recruitment process. Specifically, residence life staff can work in the following ways:

1. Learn about the recruitment and admissions processes on campus. Informal "staff exchanges" or brainstorming sessions can be very positive.

2. Suggest to staff responsible for recruiting activities on campus that residence life personnel would like to be involved. Volunteers are seldom rejected.

3. Sponsor "open houses" in residence halls for on-campus personnel involved with recruiting. It is the responsibility of residence life staff to be certain that "recruiters" are familiar with facilities, programs, and services.

4. Make residence halls available for campus visitors. Staff members and residents should be aware of (and involved with) orientation programs and potential visitors.

5. Develop and enhance written materials related to the learning that occurs in residential facilities.

6. Suggest that perspectives and interests of residence life personnel have an institutional rather than departmental base. Be proactive and creative in the new efforts.

Collaborative Efforts: Pre-enrollment Orientation Programs

As students move through the recruitment and decision-making processes, there is less need for "selling" and more need for confirmation. When students have explored the alternatives and made their choices, the content and quality of their questions and concerns tend to change as well. Residence life personnel need to remain involved with dialogues and orientation programs, even when leadership from other offices may change dramatically. New committees or planning groups often become involved. This provides another opportunity for residence life staff to interact in planning and implementation of pre-enrollment orientation programs.

Orientation programs employ one or more of three basic formats: (a) a summer program lasting one to three days, (b) a fall program that usually lasts one week, and/or (c) a course that usually lasts one term (Titley, 1985). The timing of information-sharing and immediacy of the need for information are important considerations as program components are developed. There is no generic or ideal model of program delivery that fits all campuses. To achieve the primary stated goal of orientation--to ease the transition to college and to aid students during the initial adjustment period--numerous approaches in multiple settings involving many faculty, staff, and students should be considered. Most importantly, faculty, staff, and students should share a common understanding of the institutional mission and should cooperate to deliver effective programs.

Perigo and Upcraft (1989) identify the critical components of pre-enrollment orientation programs which are generally offered during the summer immediately prior to enrollment. These components are (a) meeting continuing students, (b) meeting new students, (c) becoming familiar with the campus environment (including residence halls), (d) attending actual classes, and (e) making individual contacts with academic departments. Typically, placement exams, academic advising, registration, and campus tours are offered also during pre-orientation programs. Academic needs must be balanced with personal and social concerns of diverse groups of incoming students.

According to the most recent National Orientation Directors' Association (NODA) *Data Bank* (1990), summer orientation activities are usually confined to a relatively short period of time (generally two days) and can be organized in a variety of ways, depending upon available staff and facilities. As orientation professionals create new approaches for the dissemination of information, residence life staff can offer suggestions, support, and time. Residence life staff have expertise in supervision and team building; their participation in training the orientation staff has significant benefits for everyone involved. In addition to team building, specific details related to residence life opportunities and policies must be communicated and understood. Housing professionals can provide direct information related to dealing with emergencies, desk procedures, disciplinary problems, and confronting individual concerns. Ideally, a member of the residence life staff will be available to provide continuity and leadership throughout the orientation programs.

A directory prepared by NODA summarizes orientation program formats and content, and highlights innovative orientation programs. In the 1988-1990 NODA report, approximately 80% of all orientation programs incorporated presentations or discussion regarding residence hall living. Whether this information was presented by residence hall staff or by orientation leaders is impossible to discern. However, residence life staff have an excellent opportunity to become involved directly in campus orientation.

For many parents and students who participate in summer orientation programs, this is their first experience with university residence halls and roommates. Residence life staff can ease this transition and reduce some of the anxieties by sharing expectations, listening to concerns, and modeling interventions which are commonplace during the academic year. Developmental programming alternatives offered in residence hall lounges during orientation help to build future expectations for educational programs. Appropriate and assertive confrontation of problem behaviors during orientation programs communicates the need for maintaining a responsible living environment throughout the year. Upper-level students and staff members who are familiar with the people and programs of the various residence halls can acquaint new students with existing resources and build expectations about residence hall life. New students' attitudes about living in residence halls are generally unformed (and often uninformed); pre-enrollment orientation programs provide an ideal forum for creating positive expectations of the residential living experience.

A goal shared by most institutions is the personalization of programs. Personalization can best be accomplished by the active involvement of many faculty and staff members, not just orientation leaders. Student chances for success are further enhanced if they have at least one meaningful relationship with a faculty/staff member on campus (Astin, 1973). Hall directors and other members of the residential life staff are in excellent positions to build these connections early.

It is not only the contact with people that is important during orientation, but also the comfort and attractiveness of the facilities. During the planning process, the orientation program coordinator must be concerned with logistics and facilities. An expert in residence life can provide invaluable assistance in making a final determination about use of facilities. Collaboration during the planning stage is necessary because of maintenance schedules, accessibility, program fees, and coordination with schedules of other camps or conferences.

Organizers of orientation programs must be careful to involve residence hall staff in planning orientation activities that relate to residence life. Orientation directors who "invade" the residence halls may find that they are not always welcome. Because of the importance of orientation to the entire campus community, a team effort is needed to accomplish the goals of the program. Institutions that have been most successful have recognized orientation as a campus-wide, collaborative effort, from the beginning of planning through the final stages of evaluation.

Recommendations

Residence life professionals can contribute positively to the work of orientation teams in the following ways:

1. Join institutional planning committees. Input from residence life professionals related to choice of facilities, staffing of buildings, timing of programs, and staff training issues are critical. In addition, orientation program planners welcome new and creative approaches to all aspects of orientation.

2. Develop and present specific program components related to residence life. Take advantage of the first available opportunity to meet future residents and their parents.

3. Be aware of the physical attractiveness and practical limitations of the facilities. A number of competing program demands often need to be balanced when scheduling for facilities, particularly in the summer. Comfort, ease of access, availability, location on campus, and cleanliness are a few issues to be addressed.

4. Minimize program fees. Since most orientation programs charge program fees to participants (according to NODA *Data Bank*, approximately 80% of summer programs), housing programs can help to keep these fees low by minimizing the chargebacks (custodial costs, overhead, etc.). The short-term investment will pay long-range dividends.

5. Encourage residence hall staff to become involved actively in all aspects of the orientation programs. Whether it is a presentation to parents or facilitation of a student program, direct involvement is mutually beneficial.

6. Include residence life professionals on the orientation team. Ideally, a residence life professional (in many cases, a hall director) should be a member of the orientation staff, serving as a liaison between offices and as an assistant in the overall program.

Conclusions

The recruitment, orientation, and retention of first-year students must be viewed as an institutional mission rather than as isolated departmental tasks. The potential for creative and productive collaboration during these initial stages of student involvement is limitless. Residence life personnel have expertise and energy to contribute to the orientation process. The benefits of involvement, while difficult to measure, will be felt by staff and students alike.

Orientation does not end when the summer ends, when course requests are finalized, or even when classes begin. Rather than a series of disjointed programs, orientation must become a deliberate and coherent institutional process in which issues and questions are addressed in a timely fashion. Residence halls will provide the settings for many of these ongoing orientation programs.

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Chapter 3

Assigning First-Year Students to College Residence Halls:

Strategies to Promote Student Development

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This chapter addresses the following goals as outlined in the Introduction:

2 Help first-year students make a smooth transition to the university community

3 Provide high quality residential facilities and programs which enhance first-year students' retention and academic success

Residence life professionals have traditionally faced a dilemma when determining the most suitable housing arrangements for first-year students. Clustering new students together or "mainstreaming" them across campus can each provide benefits and inherent problems. This chapter provides an in-depth presentation of this issue and provides valuable insights from residence life professionals.

Each fall, hundreds of thousands of 18- to 23-year-old students leave for college to live in residence halls. At first glance this event seems innocent enough. These students arrive on campuses carrying boxloads of clothes as well as stereo equipment. They climb up and down steps with their belongings as they move in, typically with their parents' back-breaking assistance. They greet their new roommates and, together, try to bring some sense of order to the mountain of personal goods they have each brought to their tiny residence hall rooms. They then head out onto their hall floors, usually guided by resident assistants, to meet other new students and possibly upper-level students who will be sharing the floor and building for the new academic year. The prediction is that life in these buildings will become routine in no time, and first-year students in residence halls across the United States will settle into a common experience.

However, years of research on this phenomenon reveal that the residence hall experience is anything but common for these new students. The type of residence hall to which they are assigned and the guidance provided by their college or university staff may have a remarkable impact on the quality of their first-year experience. Put simply, the structuring of the residential environment will have a profound impact upon their college careers (Moos, 1979). When first-year students in various types of housing arrangements are asked to assess their environments to gain insight into their residential settings, they report that their perceptions about their residence experience are markedly different (Ballou, 1986). The significant impact of residence hall life for first-year students has been verified unquestionably in student affairs literature and research (Chickering, 1974; Upcraft, 1989).

An impetus for investigation of this topic has been the fact that many colleges and universities across the United States require students to live on campus in institutional housing for at least the first year (Gehring, 1983), and many have a two-year residency requirement. However, most of the time an educationally-based rationale is not communicated, nor are facilities, services, and programs organized to maximize the educational and adjustment benefits of living on campus. Relatedly, what has lacked thorough scrutiny over the years is the issue of how different types of housing arrangements for first-year students either support or undermine their overall experience (Ballou, 1983; Schelhas, 1978). This chapter reviews similarities and differences between the various living arrangements for first-year students, advocates or discourages certain options, and outlines what student affairs practitioners should do on their campuses to maximize chances for first-year student success.

The Unresolved Debate

In the literature, no complete assessment exists that indicates how many residential colleges and universities utilize halls that are designated for only first-year students, and how many first-year students are housed with upper-level students. As a prelude to developing this chapter, the author surveyed a diverse group of 50 residential institutions and discovered that 75% house first-year students and upper-level students, while 25% use first-year-only halls. Typical of American colleges and universities, first-year students at these institutions were assigned to one of four housing types: (a) first-year students grouped together in a single-sex arrangement; (b) first-year students grouped together, but in a coeducational arrangement (usually meaning that first-year men and women live in adjacent rooms or suites and share common areas in the building or on the floor); (c) first-year students housed with upper-level students in a single-sex arrangement; and (4) first-year men and women housed with upper-level men and women in a coeducational residence hall.

Historically, literature on the issue has encouraged student affairs practitioners to increase their research efforts to discover the true differences in first-year student residential environments (Ballou, 1983; Schelhas, 1978). In recent years, the effect of residential environments upon first-year students' academic performance has received heightened attention, with results revealing that none of the four common arrangements holds a particular advantage when it comes to boosting students' grade point averages (Ballou, 1985; Upcraft, 1989). However, it has been found that critical differences exist between the four when it comes to first-year students' assessment of the degree to which their housing type is seen as supportive, involving, academically helpful, and orderly (Ballou, 1986).

Opponents of first-year student residence halls have in recent years cited the absence of positive difference in academic effect plus the variance in environmental milieu as rationale to avoid this arrangement (Upcraft, 1989). Oddly, however, there is little question that, despite the research, many student affairs practitioners continue to favor first-year-only residence halls, supported by the fact that 25% of the institutions surveyed for this chapter utilize this concept.

What, then, do the professionals say? In the face of data that demonstrate that first-year students housed with upper-level students do no better or worse academically than those grouped alone, and which reveal that all-men's halls are not viewed as supportive or innovative, but highly competitive (Ballou, 1986), what rationale serves as the underpinning for continuing certain housing types? Student affairs practitioners make their judgements largely on intuition, and in this connection frame personal arguments that drive their institution's point of view.

First-Year Residence Halls: Point and Counterpoint

Proponents of first-year residence halls have stated that this type of living arrangement is more conducive to the development of adolescents entering college and allows new students to adjust more readily to college life. Schelhas (1978) reported that strong support for this arrangement comes from student affairs practitioners, counselors, and parents who assume that grouping students with similar needs will result in heightened growth-producing interaction. Hayes (1980) supports these observations, stating that the grouping of new students lends itself to specialized student development programming.

Duke University in North Carolina utilizes first-year residence halls, most of which are coeducational. Richard L. Cox, Dean for Residential Life, argues:

> This arrangement promotes unity and solidarity within the class and assures that the entire class has more nearly the same experience. . .To an extent, it provides a buffer from those kinds of upper-level behaviors which we are not particularly eager to encourage (R.L. Cox, personal communication, September, 1990).

In support, Donald H. King, Vice President for Student Affairs at Alfred University in New York, indicates:

> The advantage of first-year residence halls is that they offer a commonality of developmental issues and experiences, which makes it easier for staff to focus on and assess the needs of students. These arrangements enable the university to gradually introduce these students to the learning of copingskills, self-sufficiency, and independence (D.H. King, personal communication, September, 1990).

To the contrary, those opposed to first-year residence halls have argued that such an arrangement limits the contact of first-year students with the heterogeneous college community and promotes an unrealistic living environment. They base their argument on the theory that creating a narrow and homogeneous community during college is antidevelopmental because the home lives of first-year students prior to college involve interaction with a pluralistic world. Schelhas (1978) remarks, "Age segregation limits their contact with diverse values and lifestyles and restricts the development of their individual personalities and the roles that they perceive themselves playing in society" (p. 21). In addition, Schoemer and McConnell (1970) note that students in first-year halls do not benefit from the academic and social modeling effects that come from living with upper-level students.

At Clarion University in Pennsylvania, first-year students are housed in residence halls with upper-level students. As an advocate, Barry S. Morris, Director of Residence Life, states:

> I think it is important that first-year students not be segmented in residential areas where they could be isolated. New students living in residence halls with upper-level students have the opportunity to feel they are an integral part of the collegiate experience, and at this early stage of their development, this is important for them... This contact will help them in their selection of a major and other concerns related to their academic pursuits (B.S. Morris, personal communication, September, 1990).

Relatedly, Dennis E. Gregory, Director of Residence Life and Housing at Wake Forest University in North Carolina, argues:

> I believe that first-year students segregated from upper-level students miss the interaction which helps them mature and learn new ways to survive at their institution. Having residential interaction with upper-level students makes it easier for new students to have an environment in which they can develop along Chickering's vectors. The support of having upperclass students who have already gone through some of these changes and who also provide some of the challenge which is necessary for change is missing in first-year-only housing (D.E. Gregory, personal communication, September, 1990).

The few studies directed at housing arrangements for first-year students have provided conflicting answers. In an investigation of vandalism at 16 institutions, it was determined that first-year facilities, particularly men's halls, had higher vandalism rates than combined halls (Ballou, 1980). The institutions surveyed reported more vandalism-related cases in first-year halls and greater expense for the repair of institutional property. Bowles (1982) confirmed these findings in a similar study. Beal and Williams (1968) found that there was no significant difference in grade point averages between first-year students housed in segregated halls, a finding previously generated by Herbert (1966) and recently confirmed by Ballou (1985). However, Schoemer and McConnell (1970) discovered that first-year women living with upper-level women had higher grade point averages than those living in first-year halls.

In terms of environmental climate and impact on development, Cade (1979) found that all first-year students, regardless of living arrangement, progressed developmentally, but that first-year students living with upper-level students demonstrated a greater readiness to express impulses, seek satisfaction, and place a greater value on sensual reactions and feelings. Similarly, Chesin (1969) discovered that all first-year students, despite housing arrangement, became more mature and less stereotypic in attitudes and beliefs after completing their first college year. However, in an assessment of residence hall social climates, Ballou (1986) found that first-year students living with upper-level students reported that their environments were less internally competitive and more emotionally supportive, as well as places where new students believed they had an impact on their environment and could exert innovative influence.

The Variable of Coeducational Housing

Equally perplexing to student affairs practitioners has been the issue of whether or not first-year students should be housed in single-sex or coeducational environments. Moos (1988) outlined the history of this topic by saying that it was not until the 1960s that coeducational residence halls became a trend across the United States. The trend occurred when colleges and universities began to facilitate informal male-female relationships in residence halls by increasing visiting hours, eliminating women's closing hours, and establishing units with common dining and recreational facilities. Coeducational living environments were expected to create unique social environments, make residential life more enjoyable for students, and encourage mature heterosexual relationships. The trend toward coeducational living for first-year students was confirmed in the 50-institution survey conducted as a prelude to this chapter, which revealed that 80% house first-year men and women together, typically in adjacent hall wings, rooms, or suites.

In recent years, research on the benefits of single-sex housing for new students has pointed to an interesting discovery: women tend to create highly supportive and less competitive housing environments, while men generate a highly competitive and far less supportive living climate. However, when first-year men are mixed with women in coeducational environments, the men describe the ambiance differently, reporting increased emotional support, a greater sense of influence, and less competition. Women mixed with men notice little change (Ballou, 1986; Ring, 1982). Upcraft (1989) urged student affairs practitioners to assign first-year students to coeducational residence halls.

> In just about every way, coeducational halls are better. Students in coed halls, compared to those in segregated halls, have a greater sense of community and more actively participate in hall programs. They also report greater satisfaction with their social lives, have more informal social interaction in the living environment, and are less likely to perceive the other sex in terms of traditional sex-role stereotypes (p. 146).

In light of more refined analyses, it may be hypothesized that first-year women do, in fact, grow and develop in equally desirable ways through a positive residence hall social climate, whether it be single-sex or coeducational. Conversely, first-year men should be placed in only coeducational settings and not segregated, due to the lack of emotional support and heightened competitiveness men create in all-male halls, plus the more nurturing and innovative nature of an environment where men and women share space together. As noted by Jack Morgan, Vice President for Student Affairs at Maryville College in Missouri, "Generally, coeducational halls seem to have a calming effect on first-year male students" (J.D. Morgan, personal communication, September, 1990).

Ballou (1986) advanced the idea that the significant differences in perception found between all-male and all-female residence environments may be a function of the natural developmental tendencies of the sexes: adolescent women tend to focus on the development of nurturing relationships as a prelude to personal autonomy, while adolescent men attempt to establish individual autonomy prior to developing meaningful interpersonal relations. This is consistent with Gilligan's (1982) examination of the dominance in our society of the male-oriented developmental model and her hypothesis that women follow a markedly different path that favors relationship building as a prelude to the establishment of a clear, interdependent identity.

From such a perspective, student affairs practitioners are left to question whether or not first-year men and women are deprived of their more natural developmental milieu through the blending of the sexes in residence. To what extent is coeducational living an interference in the appropriate developmental paths that the sexes would normally seek in the late-adolescent stage?

In terms of the appropriate living environment for women, the wisdom of coeducational living in the first college year is called into question by Sherry Gutman, Associate Dean of Students/Director of Residence Life at Southwestern University in Texas.

> We live in a society in which the prevailing culture is that of the white, heterosexual male. Research shows that that when men and women are placed in group situations (such as the classroom), it is the men who dominate, whether through self-initiation or more subtle mechanisms such as women's acquiescence. Women need opportunities to be in groups and exercise self- and community-management free of the confounding dynamics of sexism which the presence of men intensifies. While a major argument in favor of coeducational living is that it is more educational than single-sex living, I also believe that an important component of gender identity is forged in the process of relating to persons of the same sex (S. Gutman, personal communication, September, 1990).

Moos (1988) concluded that research on residential settings implies that more positive social environments are created in women's and coeducational halls than in men's halls. He also noted that there were no differences in social climate perceptions of men and women in coeducational halls.

In spite of the findings that vandalism rises significantly when men are housed alone (Ballou, 1980), residential type has no significant impact on the academic performance of first-year students (Ballou, 1985; Beal & Williams, 1968; Herbert, 1966). Men in single-sex arrangements describe their residential environments as places where there is significantly less emotional support and innovation, more competition, and where their influence is low (Ballou, 1986). It can be concluded that the issue is not so much which arrangements for first-year students should be promoted, but which arrangement should be avoided: single-sex housing for men, whether first-year only or first-year mixed with upper-level students. This recommendation is in keeping with Dalton and Allen (1983) and Waldo (1986) who advocated that, for all resident students, living environments must be viewed by inhabitants as supportive and involving, or a host of residential problems will arise.

Assigning First-Year Students

Upcraft (1989) recommended six strategies in assigning first-year students to residence halls: (a) assign first-year students by academic major, (b) assign first-year students according to academic ability, (c) assign first-year students to coeducational residence halls, (d) assign first-year students with upper-level students, (e) do not overcrowd floors and buildings, and (f) assign first-year student roommates according to selected criteria. An analysis of these recommendations reveals that some strategies should continue to stand in residential planning by student affairs practitioners, while others are either problematic or no longer applicable.

Assigning first-year students by academic major can be problematic for institutions that encourage new students to experiment across the curriculum and not designate a specific major until the end of the sophomore year. This is the case with the majority of smaller liberal arts and sciences colleges, most of which are residential. Assigning first-year students by academic ability can be a complex task at institutions with large residence hall systems, such as public comprehensive universities that accept students with wide ranges of standardized test scores and high school academic records.

Concerning overcrowding, student affairs practitioners would likely make every effort to avoid the interference caused by this variable. With the rise and fall of local first-year student enrollments, most housing offices have little or no control over the problem despite their best intentions, and overcrowded halls are a natural result of fluctuating admissions profiles. Regarding roommate matching, research has demonstrated that consideration of selected personality and life-style criteria in assigning first-year roommates increases the likelihood of student satisfaction with the residence experience (Moos, 1988).

Upcraft's recommendations are, however, subject to revision. Considering Gutman's (personal communication, September 1990) commentary, there seems to be reemerging wisdom to consider single-sex halls as highly appropriate for many first-year women, at the same time recognizing that first-year men may be best served by assignment to coeducational arrangements. Ring (1982) and Tice (1978) generated data that seemed to corroborate the notion that single-sex halls, possibly more than coeducational halls, may provide the best developmental environment for first-year women students. In these studies, women described single-sex halls as involving, oriented toward academic achievement, supportive of independence, and overall a highly positive social milieu.

In the final analysis, student affairs practitioners must pay close attention to assignment variables such as those outlined by Upcraft (1989). More importantly, they must confront their own institution's degree of initiative and intentional planning in addressing the unique developmental needs of all their first-year students, some particular to gender, some not. In the end, it may be the institution's overarching outreach to the special needs of the first-year student population that will make the critical difference. Scott Anchors, Director of Residential Life at the University of Maine, labels this "intentionality:"

> The key for us in working with first-year students is in being intentional in our efforts. This means having a clear understanding of their needs, developmental challenges, and how to conceptualize goals to assist in achieving success. Ultimately, we seek a unique programming environment for creating "teachable moments" (S. Anchors, personal communication, September, 1990).

It is this spirit, ultimately, that pervades all successful residence life programs for first-year students. Though the various types of housing arrangements for first-year students have been analyzed in differing ways producing, at times, contradictory results, one postulate remains clear: first-year students have unique developmental needs that the institution must vigorously address through various types of programs. Addressing unique developmental needs of first-year students requires in-depth knowledge of the first-year experience by student affairs practitioners, commitment of institutional resources to enhance the first year, and "intentionality" on the part of student affairs practitioners to develop an engaging and vibrant first-year residential experience.

At the College of William and Mary in Virginia, the residential experience translates into an action plan described by Sam Sadler, Vice President for Student Affairs.

> First-year residence halls are staffed much more deeply than in upperclass areas. Beginning with orientation, intensive residence programs are provided to introduce first-year students to the full range of issues and decisions they face as members of the college community. These include personal growth, sexuality, self-governance, civility, alcohol and drug use, among a host of other programs. . .With separate assignment, intensive staffing, and focused programming, our research indicates that strong bonds are developed among members of the new class, that they

> quickly move into the main stream of life, and assume adult roles in the process. With an academic casualty rate for first-year students of less than 1%, our approach seems successful (S. Sadler, personal communication, September, 1990).

This high degree of intent is echoed by Gary Kimble, Assistant Director for Staff and Student Development at the University of Southern Mississippi.

> Specialized programs for first-year students are absolutely essential, and they serve to reduce the attrition of those students often lost in the mainstreaming process. Through programs directed specifically at first-year students, not only are retention efforts enhanced, but the developmental issues challenging these students are addressed more effectively. Coordinated in their efforts, faculty and staff are able to provide the necessary support to insure a successful first-year experience (G. Kimble, personal communication, September, 1990).

The assignment of first-year students to college residence halls is only one ingredient in the much broader recipe for student success in the first year of college. In particular, single-sex housing for first-year men should be avoided, certain women may have more positive developmental experiences in an all-female environment, and academic success is not affected by residence hall assignment. Beyond these, the mark of the higher quality residential programs for new students is "intentionality" on the part of institutional planners and deployment of university resources to support programs for students in residence. The synthesis of these variables undergirds the ultimate prospects for success during the first year of college.

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Chapter 4

The Role of Residence Life Programs in Easing the Transition for First-Year Students

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This chapter addresses the following goals as outlined in the Introduction:

1 Serve as an integral component of the recruitment and orientation of new students

2 Help first-year students make a smooth transition to the university community

3 Provide high quality residential facilities and programs which enhance student retention and academic success

7 Provide social and educational programs which help students fulfill academic and developmental competencies

First-year students often find the transition to college and university life difficult and problematic. Residence life staff can play a critical role in developing support systems and program strategies which facilitate a smooth transition into the campus environment. Successful adjustment to the campus community can significantly enhance new student success and retention.

First-year college students cope with a highly complex set of tasks, transitions, and adaptations. While attempting to deal with self-identity, relationships, separation, and career planning issues, first-year students need to achieve academic success. This chapter describes the interrelated uses of transition models and retention strategies as they apply to students' success. Residence life staff provide a unique environment to support systematically students' success. Through this environment, residence life staff can facilitate the personal development and retention of first-year students through intentionally planned programming strategies.

Introduction

As new students enter colleges and universities each fall, they bring a complex set of needs related to making a successful transition to a new environment. As part of this process, first-year students need to be successful academically. Throughout the decade of the 1980s and into the 1990s, academic pressures to succeed have escalated for first-year college students. They feel greater stress to be successful in order to enter an increasingly competitive job market at the end of the college experience. Many parents, interested in vocational preparation, are not sympathetic to intellectual or vocational experimentation. There is greater preoccupation with the question "How can I get ahead?" rather than "What can I learn?" Manifold needs exist, in addition to academic success, as first-year students rework relationships with parents, balancing a need to stay part of the family system while entering a new and separate world. This transition process is highly challenging and complex, with few absolute answers or structured guidelines.

This challenging, searching, reworking process takes a great deal of time and energy. Koplik and DeVito (1986) compared problems of first-year students from the classes of 1976 and 1986. Over that decade, they viewed first-year college students in 1986 as being more troubled than ten years previously. First-year students seem to be increasingly distressed in many aspects of their lives. They feel they are not as well prepared for college work as earlier first-year students, and they worry more over future success in life. They fear unemployment after graduation, and they are concerned about choosing classes that will prepare them for jobs. Another concern is loneliness which Sundberg (1988) found to be a pervasive problem for first-year college students regardless of race or gender. Loneliness has a spiraling effect. In other words, some loneliness creates more loneliness. To prevent this, problems need to be identified and confronted in the early part of the first year.

Medalie (1981) views the first year of college as a miniature life cycle with students constantly moving through developmental phases. These stages involve increasingly complex choices. Every three to four months, students need to make new course selections, possibly seek new living arrangements, seek out ways to adapt to new friendships, and continue to plan long-range goals. Medalie feels first-year students need to work through three developmental tasks:

- ✓ mourning the losses involved in giving up certain parts of one's previous life,
- ✓ making new attachments,
- ✓ becoming successful academically as a continuous part of working toward a career.

Not all first-year students are successful in working through these developmental tasks. Some may choose to stay aligned more heavily with peers from their previous community; others may choose to avoid or deny the need for more self-directed learning in college.

This chapter will focus on two interrelated factors involved in success for first-year students. The first is how residence life programs can support first-year students in a smooth transition, while the second is how a retention program can be integrated from the beginning of the transition process.

The Transition Process: The Critical First Six Weeks

As first-year college students enter a new environment, they are most likely experiencing a complex set of reactions to their transition. They may be excited, confused, frightened, sad, or elated over events such as attending new classes, moving into their residence hall, and meeting new students in social activities. Some first-year students will adapt fairly easily to this process, while others may experience significant difficulty.

Levitz and Noel (1989) have identified the first six weeks as a critical time in the potential successful transition of first-year students. Residence life programmers need to think through questions like the following to support this important transition process: How can better predictions be made as to how first-year college students will positively react to transitions? Are there planned strategies or models to understand better this transition process? What determines whether a person gains from the experience or tends to be overwhelmed by the stress? Is there a context or framework that would be helpful to orient first-year students as they move into, through, and out of the transition process?

Transition Models

The experience of first-year college students with transitions can be viewed from three different models or perspectives: a cultural model, a psychological model, and a multifaceted model. First, from a cultural perspective, first-year transitions can be seen as analagous to the transition process of moving into a foreign culture. As first-year students enter the university environment with its new culture, there may be a great deal of stress and challenge to their present belief systems.

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) have proposed a "W curve" model to describe the transition process of movement into and out of a foreign culture. Translating their concepts into the first-year experience, the first phase involves preparation to move into the new university culture. Hope and excitement of a new adventure are predominant feelings. As one enters the new university culture, the reality of differences strikes home, and first-year students experience some degree of "culture shock." As first-year students continue to adapt and adjust to the new environment, they rebound from the discomfort. First-year students begin to feel more integrated into the new culture as they continue to connect to the university experience. The second wave of adjustment comes when first-year students return home and experience a new set of adjustments in a previously familiar setting.

A second working through of a "culture shock" occurs as the person adjusts to both the university culture and to the home community culture. A successful synthesis has occurred when first-year college students feel relatively comfortable and connected in both the university and home community; they are then able to move between and within the two cultures without feeling undue stress.

Lewis and Jungman (1986) have modified the "W curve" of Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963). Translating their model into the first-year experience, new students would approach the beginning of school with a normal amount of intensity, making decisions to leave home, while saying goodbye to the home community. This is characterized as the preliminary phase. After entering the university, first-year students may feel greater intensity about their experience, but remain passive spectators initially. The third phase, the participatory phase, involves a great deal more activity on the part of first-year students. The greatest amount of conflict of cultures between first-year students' home communities and the university occurs during this phase. If this conflict is not resolved, it can lead to the fourth phase of the transition, culture shock. As first-year students move on and through this phase, they experience the final phases of adaptation and re-entry. The final phase means integration into the university and a strong feeling of connectedness.

From a psychological perspective, Brammer and Abrego (1981) have developed a seven-stage transition model that relates to movement through the transition process. These stages are the following:

- ✓ shock and immobilization,
- ✓ minimization and denial,
- ✓ depression,
- ✓ letting go,
- ✓ testing options,
- ✓ search for meaning,
- ✓ integration.

First-year students may encounter some strong stressors to their self-esteem upon entering the new college environment which is concerned with developing academic success.

Finally, Schlossberg (1981) presents a model involving multiple factors to move successfully through the transition process. She sees the following as important:

- ✓ the individual's perception of the particular transition,
- ✓ the characteristics of the individual environment,
- ✓ the characteristics of the individual.

With respect to the environment, Schlossberg views intimate relationships, the family unit, a network of friends, institutional supports, and the physical setting as important factors. With respect to the individual, Schlossberg sees psychosocial competence, life stage, health, race/ethnicity, value orientation, socioeconomic status, and previous experience with a transition of a similar nature as important. Thus, the ease of adaptation will be strongly influenced by the individual's strengths and weaknesses. These, in turn, will influence the way the individual views and adapts to the new environment.

First-year students may experience a changed lifestyle as they integrate new behaviors and beliefs into a more comprehensive view of themselves. They need to recognize the process through which they have evolved, making connections with the past and understanding that these skills will be worthwhile in future transitions.

Strategies for Residence Life Staff: Aiding the Transition Process

Residence life staff can provide first-year college students with a number of opportunities to connect with the university through staff contacts and programs to aid the transition during the first critical six weeks, while educating them to community living. Programs need to be designed to support necessary coping skills. Coelho, Hamburg, and Murphy (1963) have identified a number of coping strategies to deal more effectively with the transition process. First-year students need to retain a focus on a positive self-image involving their capabilities and previous successes in handling other transitions. They need to develop or mesh existing skills into new combinations. For instance, they need to learn how to organize blocks of time, study for longer periods of time, assess the interests of professors, and break down larger projects into more manageable smaller projects. They need to seek out actively upper-level students as resources. They also need to be favorably oriented toward the faculty and to identify with faculty learning goals and beliefs. In addition, they need to establish a support network of friends who can offer assistance, act as a sounding board, offer a pooling of information, and provide intellectual stimulation. Residence hall staffs can support the development of these types of coping skills by intentional programming efforts in these areas.

In addition, first-year college students need support and feedback while learning about community responsibilities involving rules, regulations, authority, and norms in the residence hall environment. Staff members may become caught in the conflict of trying to resolve first-year students' needs for security balanced with their needs for autonomy. This may lead to a great deal of confusion for both parties as to what is expected. When this occurs, staff members can provide feedback to first-year students on their possible conflicting needs by offering the opportunity to engage in some mutual problem-solving. One other area of concern for the staff member will be first-year students' testing of limits to their autonomy. Housing regulations must set limits for persons to push against. If these are not applied, first-year students may be quite anxious about the amount of freedom available.

Retention Strategies

Residence life can greatly aid the transition process and help first-year college students to be more academically successful by building in retention strategies from the beginning of the academic year. Astin (1973) and Chickering (1974) have documented the positive impact on retention that living on campus can have.

As stated previously, Levitz and Noel (1989) have identified the first six weeks as a critical time period for active intervention by the university. They feel four major areas need to be addressed during that time to support first-years students' success in the university:

- ✓ help new students make connections and become involved in the university environment,
- ✓ help them work through the transition process,
- ✓ help first-year students work toward academic and career goals,
- ✓ support their success in the classroom.

First-year students need opportunities to experience success, to join with potential mentors, to develop "mapping" skills, to locate resources, and to develop realistic academic and personal goals. Thus, it can be seen that transition strategies and retention strategies are highly interactive with each supporting chances for success for first-year students.

A number of approaches have been developed to improve retention of first-year students. Astin (1985) feels that universities need to emphasize the involvement of students and the development of their talent as a major priority. This emphasis on involvement is very congruent with Levitz and Noel's (1989) concept of promoting retention through connecting first-year students to the university.

Young, Backer, and Rogers (1989) describe a successful program involving advising and scheduling of courses for new students in the second semester of their senior year of high school. The participants in the program have much higher grades and lower attrition than nonparticipants.

Zeller, Kanz, and Schneiter (1990) reported on a comprehensive program to connect academic affairs and student affairs in efforts to support the success of first-year college students. This multifaceted program spanned recruitment efforts, the orientation process, programmatic efforts to promote student involvement, and academic support resources. Examples of program strategies would include focus on academic and residence life resources, leadership training classes, peer advisor programs, student resource centers, and computer labs.

Important lessons on retention can be learned from studying the programs of historically black colleges and universities. Schools such as Spelman College, Howard University, and Florida A & M University have had a long tradition of excellence with respect to retention programs for first-year students. Spelman College engages in a number of deliberate programmatic efforts to retain first-year students. Beginning in the orientation process and continuing throughout the academic year, a weekly convocation series offers intellectual challenges to new students. A suggested reading list is offered to first-year students, along with a series of coordinated activities. Spelman College staff operate an early warning system to identify students at risk after the fifth week of the semester. Tutorial labs and academic support programs are offered with a requirement that high-risk students attend. A first-year advising system offers a student/faculty ratio of 16 to 1. Finally, residence halls are involved in this effort by developing programs related to the reading list, as well as other activities.

In addition, researchers have studied retention efforts for black students at predominantly white institutions. Giles-Gee (1989) found that a retention program for first-year black students that emphasizes academic advising, study skills training, and the use of tutorial services significantly improves their grades. O'Callaghan and Bryant (1990) found, among other variables, that black students who were able to understand and deal with racism performed better academically.

Retention and Residence life

Moving more specifically to retention of students related to efforts by housing personnel, Dougherty (1987) offers a series of guidelines for the development of a residential retention program. First, he recommends establishing a clear set of operational goals and directives for a housing retention committee. Second, available data need to be examined to discover the characteristics of those remaining in residence halls and those leaving the halls and/or leaving school. In addition, it would be helpful to identify what the housing environment is doing to facilitate or inhibit residents' retention. Third, the retention committee needs to target specific groups, such as high-risk students, undecided students, non-traditional students, and low academic performers. Fourth, program strategies need to be developed and put into place. Finally, evaluation of the retention efforts needs to occur.

Strategies for Residence Life Staff: Aiding Retention

Program strategies in residence halls to aid the retention and success of first-year college students can be grouped into several categories. Programs to connect first-year students to the college could include: summer orientation, teaching "mapping" and transition skills, "adopt a freshman," orientation assistant programs, and courses or seminars on first-year "survival" skills. Environmental planning programs could include: honor floors or halls, floors by majors, study lounges, computer rooms, quiet floors, decoration of common areas, and interest floors or halls, such as wellness halls. Academic skill development programs could include: reading and study skills, identification of individual learning styles, overcoming test anxiety, overcoming speech anxiety, academic advising, tutoring, developing computer literacy, and time management. Career advising programs could include: career exploration through computer simulations such as SIGI and SIGI-Plus with residence hall career days, development of "profiles" of successful students in various majors, and career job search advising. Faculty involvement programs could include: faculty fellow programs, classrooms and courses taught in the halls, a floor "adoption" of faculty members, "last lecture" series, and inviting faculty to meals with entire wings or floors. In addition, liaison relationships are important between residence halls and the counseling center, career development center, student advising office, academic achievement center, tutoring labs, and peer advising centers.

Finally, Waldo (1986) found that improving communication skills and roommate compatibility increased students' GPAs and retention. These results supported a previous study by Waldo and Fuhriman (1981). Both studies provide residence hall staff with the rationale for creating greater opportunities for first-year students to develop stronger communication and conflict-resolution skills, particularly as these relate to roommate compatibility.

Residence life staff can significantly affect the successful transition and retention of first-year college students. Residence halls provide a unique community environment to promote connectedness and involvement with the university.

Recommendations

Specific recommendations for residence life programs to ease the transition process for new students include the following:

- Residence life staff need to view programmatic strategies as integrated efforts to deal with developmental tasks, transition processes, and retention efforts for first-year college students.
- Residence hall staff need to understand differential developmental needs for individuals other than traditional male first-year students by creating programmatic strategies to aid student development in a diverse academic community.
- Residence life staff need to understand the transition process that new students move through, while generating specific intervention strategies to deal with the critical period of the first six weeks.
- Residence life staff need to view retention efforts from multiple perspectives, beginning with summer orientation and continuing throughout the first year.
- Programs need to be developed to deal with high-risk students, students with undeclared majors and/or unclear career goals, and students with nontraditional backgrounds.
- Residence life staff need to develop programmatic "bridges" with academic faculty and staff to meet the multiple needs of first-year students.
- Systematic evaluation of programs must occur to identify where and why programs are successful.

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Chapter 5

Encouraging the Retention and Academic Success of First-Year Students

Through Residence-Based Academic Support Programming

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This chapter addresses the following goals as outlined in the Introduction:

3 Provide high quality residential facilities and programs which enhance the retention and academic success of first-year students

4 Provide opportunities for informal out-of-class contact between faculty and new students

7 Provide social and educational programs which help students fulfill academic and developmental competencies

12 Work to create an understanding of the ethos that the university is an interactive community of scholars

Increasingly higher expectations are being placed upon residence hall programs to support the educational mission of colleges and universities. The programs and services offered outside the classroom should complement what is happening inside the classroom. First-year students, in particular, can benefit greatly from the unique opportunities residence-based academic support programming can provide.

Residence hall programs offer significant opportunities for helping new students succeed academically. On a campus where a large percentage of all residential students are in their first year of college, "home base" for these new students is most likely to be the residence hall. Of the 168 hours available in a week, the new student will spend approximately 70 hours actively engaged in the residence hall living environment. This substantial amount of time offers great potential for developing institutional interventions which support and assist new students in succeeding academically.

New students share the common experience of living in the residence hall, as well as many common attitudes, beliefs, and problems. They may have only vague notions of what college is about (National Institute of Education, 1984) and, in many cases, expect to be less than satisfied with their college experience (Astin, 1985). New students enter the university unfamiliar with academic requirements, university regulations, and the programs and services that are available to them. Nevertheless, as a group, new students are probably more motivated to learn about the institution and academic success strategies than they will be at any other time in their college career.

The challenge which can also be an opportunity for those wishing to strengthen academic success programs for new students within a residence hall system is to build a program that

1. supports and assists the student in understanding and adjusting to the academic opportunities and expectations of the institution;

2. focuses on academics and supports intellectual pursuits;

3. encourages students to seek needed academic information and improve their academic performance skills;

4. involves faculty, staff, and their families in ways that encourage students to know them personally and seek their advice and support freely.

Academic Atmosphere and Focus

Efforts must be directed toward establishing an academic focus for the residence hall before these academic goals can be addressed successfully. While new students recognize that classes and learning are the reasons they are attending college, the process of making friends and becoming a part of the campus is an overriding initial concern. Social and friendship needs, and the impact such needs have on personal living style and behavior, are an important focus for the early programming efforts of residence hall staff. The danger of focusing exclusively on these adjustment needs, however, is that the institution may lose critical opportunities available only at the beginning of an academic career to support student success.

Unfortunately, academic and non-academic functions have become almost separate worlds on college and university campuses (Boyer, 1990). The tendency to separate academic life and out-of-class life into distinct facets of the university experience is pervasive throughout much of higher education. The residence hall program, especially for first-year students, must actively work against this tendency by emphasizing the interrelatedness of each aspect of the new student's ongoing experiences and the need to balance potentially conflicting demands of academic and out-of-class pressures. There is no better way to begin the process of discovering the symbiotic relationship of intellectual and personal life than by discussing academic matters in small groups during initial orientation sessions.

A constant and continuing emphasis on the intellectual side of university life must be a function of those responsible for both the in-class and out-of-class experiences. From the first day, or even in written communications sent before a student arrives, academic goals for residential living should be announced and emphasized. The atmosphere of a residence hall must be supportive of academic success. Therefore, policy and procedure decisions concerning appropriate behavior and atmosphere should be determined quickly. Once expectations are established, atmosphere will affect attitude. If a residence hall provides ping pong tables, it should also provide a basic resource area to house reference books, computer terminals, etc. At the same time, a study area is as important as a lounge area. Admittedly, creating an atmosphere supportive of the educational mission of the institution is easier said than done; however, very little can be achieved if there is not a continuing commitment and emphasis on the importance of a quality atmosphere for learning as well as living.

Key to Success: A Coordinated Program

It is very important for an institution to design intentional strategies which address the academic needs of entering students. Significant opportunities exist in the residential setting to help new students succeed academically. However, several conditions must exist if a long-term, residence-based academic support program is to be successful.

Most importantly, it must be recognized that the live-in residence hall staff cannot provide these services in isolation. Continuous and effective staff leadership for a coordinated campus program is needed from upper-level administrators across campus. This leadership must be based on a strong belief and commitment to the idea that residence halls offer unique learning opportunities important to the student and to the long-term academic success of the institution.

The involvement of specialists in orientation, academic and career advising, student counseling, faculty, and others is essential. However, successful collaboration will not happen unless initiated by central leadership in the residence halls and with full support of the student affairs executive officers who can help build the support and enthusiasm of the president and major academic officers. If a residence-based academic support program is to work, both academic and student service professionals across the campus must be enthusiastic about delivering at least some portion of their programs in the residence hall setting. In addition faculty reward systems should incorporate faculty participation in such programs.

Peer Delivered Programs

For the most part, residence-based academic support programs are delivered in group settings. Given the volume of educational programming possible, it is unrealistic to expect that all or most programming can be delivered to individual students by full-time professionals working evenings and weekends. Professionals must find alternate means of program delivery. Astin (1985) speaks to the effectiveness of peer tutoring as a means of enhancing institutional effectiveness. Realistically, the most effective method of academic support program delivery in residence halls is through the use of paid student peer educators who are selected, trained, certified, and supervised by career student service professionals within their respective offices. In other words, student-to-student program delivery is recommended with professional staff providing ongoing training, supervision, and quality control of the peer educators. It is important to pay peer educators in order to encourage a high level of professionalism supported by required training, quality control, and commitment over time. The literature on student retention and student involvement underscores the significance of providing students with meaningful opportunities to contribute to the institution. The caring environment which is created when committed upper-level students actively work to help new students sends a clear message that the university cares about student academic success and values active student involvement throughout the undergraduate experience.

The first-year student follow-up studies examining student retention and satisfaction conducted by the ACE-UCLA Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) (Astin, Green, & Korn, 1987) indicate that the area where there is greatest need for improvement in retaining and satisfying students is in personal services such as counseling, advising, financial aid, academic assistance, health services, and job placement. The area of academic advising is identified as a long-term special concern. It is probably the key factor in helping students become involved in their studies which, in turn, contributes substantially to their level of involvement and leads to higher achievement and retention. An early emphasis in the residence halls on supporting academic success clearly offers the institution an exceptional opportunity to influence new student success in college.

Faculty Involvement and Living-Learning Centers

Substantial research supports the importance of student interaction with faculty and staff. Astin (1985), summarizing the research on student involvement, reports that "frequent interaction with faculty members is more strongly related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement or, indeed, any other student or institutional characteristic" (p. 149). The highest possible priority in residential programs encouraging first-year student success should be providing opportunities for students to have contact with faculty outside the classroom.

A number of institutions over many years have recognized the importance of faculty-involvement programs in residence halls. Indiana-Bloomington, Vermont, Trinity (Texas), Purdue, Delaware, Monmouth (New Jersey), Illinois, Southern California, UCLA, UC Davis and many others have faculty-involvement programs. In its most common form, faculty-involvement programming consists of efforts to link students with faculty through dining hall guest programs, inviting faculty and their families to special hall and university events, using faculty to support weekly speaker programs, etc.

While faculty-involvement programs are difficult to develop and more difficult to sustain, the benefit of informal contact between faculty and students can be of critical importance to individual students, to the institution, and to the overall contribution of the residence hall program. The goal of programs designed to personalize the institution is to create a climate of caring and concern, as well as to provide students with a source of support and guidance in times of academic stress and personal need.

Sustaining residence hall based faculty-involvement programs requires strong central office leadership and commitment. Beyond that, however, faculty and staff involvement in residential living programs needs institution-wide encouragement and recognition. Developing support and recognition for those faculty and staff willing to devote personal time to students in these types of programs is an extremely important reward. Purdue University is an example of an institution that has a comprehensive recognition program for faculty who perform well in faculty-associate roles.

Co-curricular programs that are closely integrated with academic programs, however, have the best chance of long-term success. Efforts to unite academic and residential living programs can be as simple as grouping students according to academic interest (e.g., foreign-language corridors), or as complex as offering programs for academic credit in the residence hall with assigned faculty and academic department status. The common purpose of living-learning programs is to unite academic and student life programs in ways that encourage the personal as well as the intellectual development of students, supplement or enrich the traditional curriculum, encourage feelings of community through more personalized student-faculty relations, as well as improve student satisfaction with the college experience and the quality of residential living environments.

Residential colleges or living-learning centers, a concept popular as an educational reform effort in the early 1970s, are attracting renewed interest on many campuses. Schein and Bowers (1990) have described the characteristics and variety found in living-learning centers across the country in some depth. Housed in residence halls, these programs usually offer courses and academic credit. Some are degree granting and have specific curricula. On larger research-oriented campuses, these programs tend to place a great emphasis on small, intimate classes that enhance student/ faculty interaction. Programs are characterized by instruction in a seminar format, interaction outside the classroom, and the formation of strong relationships between classmates and instructors. On smaller campuses, living-learning programs tend to focus either on special student interests or on important educational and social questions or issues. Terry Smith, Dean of the Colleges at Northeast Missouri State University, has compiled a list of about 90 institutions known to have residential colleges or living-learning centers. There is an obvious relationship between the purposes of programs designed to improve first-year student success and living-learning programs. Colleges and universities wishing to improve the quality of their residence life program and improve programming for first-year student success should strongly consider the development of programs linking academic and residential student life.

Academic Advising

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of academic advising to new students. Kramer and Spencer (1990) argue that the very heart of of academic advising for first-year students is personalized advising. They also maintain that academic advising should be different for first-year students. Advisers of first-year students must assess needs, give individual assistance in course scheduling, identify tutorial needs, connect areas of students' interests with campus resources, and familiarize first-year students with academic departments and faculty. Gaining an institutional commitment (funding and staffing) for a comprehensive system of this nature will likely be a time-consuming and difficult proposition for most colleges and universities. Traditional advising systems (faculty-based or centralized) will not adjust easily to the increased demand called for by the type of personalized advising recommended. At the same time, it would truly be difficult to find a more productive use of funds for an institution with a major concern about supporting first-year students' academic success and retention.

Advising first-year students where they live appears to be an excellent, but little used, way to reach this very important group. True residence hall advising systems for first-year students are rare. Miami University, a medium-sized public university in Ohio, has had a summer orientation program in place since 1929 at which faculty members from each of the academic divisions advise and register incoming students. Individual academic advising responsibilities are then assumed by a live-in residence hall staff member who has a masters degree. This professional is supported by a graduate assistant and undergraduate students who provide a staff/ student advising ratio of 1 to 20. Since it is not necessary for students to make an appointment, their questions often can be answered by simply walking down the hall to meet with advising staff.

First-year student advisors receive intense training in curriculum, comprehensive advising principles, and institutional referral systems. They are committed to offering personal attention to their advisees and are expected to maintain a constant flow of academic information to residents and to work closely with divisional advising offices. Residence hall staff, of course, are expected to pay close attention to and make appropriate interventions when the more personal aspects of a student's life begin to detract from college success. Some of the credit for Miami's student retention rate, which currently exceeds 90% through four semesters, must be given to the efforts made to concentrate new student resources, academic support programs, and academic advising in the residence halls.

Other residential academic advising support and delivery systems are possible. Some large universities use satellite offices in residential living areas to offer academic advising and counseling services to students. Peers are often trained to help in some aspects of these satellite delivery systems. Even when more formalized systems are not in place, residence life staff, working closely with centralized advising offices and academic departments, can schedule on-site academic counseling and course advising for students grouped by academic majors and interest areas. Regardless of the specific methods used, collaborative efforts among academic advisors, faculty, and staff to offer academic advising services to new students within the residence hall should improve the quality of academic advising. Delivering quality residential academic advising services to new students, however, requires formal and long-term agreements and understandings. One-time programs are well intended and can be a beginning. However, real improvement in offering services to students through the residence hall program must have meaningful institutional support over an extended period of time.

Learning Support

Perhaps the easiest and most productive way to offer academic support programming in the residence hall setting is through learning skills instruction and other types of learning support services. Learning skill assessments and workshops, structured course reviews, and individually arranged tutorials can all be offered in a residence hall setting with minimum difficulty. Regularly scheduled, ongoing learning skill workshops for new students can easily be developed. Students who need more intense academic support can be identified and referred to centralized academic support services. Mid-term and final review sessions can be scheduled for those courses which many new students find particularly difficult. Individual or small-group tutorials can be arranged for students who have academic difficulty. It should be assumed, however, that very talented students, as well as those who experience difficulty, will benefit from programs designed to improve learning skills. Residence-based academic success programs should be designed for all new students and not marketed as remedial. These efforts not only potentially benefit significant numbers of students, but also demonstrate that the residence hall program and the institution, as a whole, care about student success.

One model for obtaining the skilled staff resources needed to offer quality educational programming, including learning skills instruction in the residence hall setting is in place at Miami University. Peer educators trained by the Office of Learning Assistance at Miami are employed through the Residence Life Office to deliver requested programs. They also work a specified number of hours per week as liaison persons in the residence hall to provide learning support and advice to residents and to make referrals for more specialized learning support services. Other programs, designed to provide trained student educators for student development programming (e.g., career planning, peer relationships, sexual stereotyping, eating disorders, etc.), are in various stages of development at Miami. Ready resources of trained and certified program presenters, for comparatively small amounts of money, are made available to assist in making the residence halls truly supportive of student learning.

Summary and Conclusions

Residence halls are home for a large percentage of students entering college directly from high school each year. They provide very important opportunities available nowhere else in the institution to assist first-year students in their initial adjustment to campus life, making connections with faculty and staff, learning about institutional opportunities and services, and effectively receiving direct academic and student support services. Success in taking advantage of these opportunities requires a commitment by the residence life and institutional leaders, support from a number of student support services, and a comprehensive program of service delivery. The use of student peer educators, trained and supervised by student service professionals, offers the best potential for providing the services and information needed by new students. Above all it must be recognized that residence hall staff must have strong, ongoing support from the entire institution to deliver successfully the residence-based academic support programs and services needed by new students.

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Chapter 6

Paraprofessional Staff And the First-Year Experience

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This chapter addresses the following goals as outlined in the Introduction:

3 Provide high quality residential facilities and programs which enhance student retention and academic success

6 Select, train, and assign professional and paraprofessional staff to address the specific needs of new students

7 Provide social and educational programs which help students fulfill academic and developmental competencies

10 Develop a strong sense of community and support for new students within individual living units

Upper-level students serving as mentors for first-year students can offer unique opportunities for developing meaningful support systems for students in the residential setting. The resident assistant, in particular, can play a critical role in making front-line connections between the university and the new student.

Higher education institutions have experienced a marked increase in the number and types of paraprofessional staff being used as agents for assisting new students. Student services administrators have been quick to discover that students can become an effective and efficient means to deliver information to fellow students if they are carefully selected, trained, and supervised.

With the expansion of the student life profession, increasing numbers of paraprofessional positions are developing. For example, tutoring, which has been traditionally defined as one-on-one academic assistance, is sometimes expanded into mentoring, a more comprehensive activity that combines both academic and non-academic support. Peer mentors generally are upper-level students who through various means establish a relationship with first-year students for the purpose of guiding and assisting them with early adjustment to college life. Some mentor programs have become highly specialized, such as those designed to assist minority students.

Some variations of these programs are referred to as "peer advisor" or "peer facilitator" programs, and many of them also specialize with respect to subject area. Administrators have discovered, for example, that students often will pay more attention to messages delivered by other students, especially when the messages are of a sensitive nature. Issues of sexuality, campus security, and rape awareness are now being addressed by peer facilitators at a large number of institutions. Judging from the success of these various programs, it is clear that if peer leaders are properly selected, trained, supervised, and motivated, they provide an effective means of reaching students in general and new students in particular.

One of the older and more developed paraprofessional positions is the resident assistant (RA) position. Using the RA position as an example, this chapter will demonstrate important aspects of creating a paraprofessional staff development program. For the most part, these ideas and concepts are transferrable to other paraprofessional positions.

Paraprofessional staff positions originated some time after the Second World War, consistent with the development of high-rise residence halls. Managing buildings of this size forced the further development of a staffing pattern previously used in smaller residence halls. In order to provide adequate staffing, graduate and undergraduate students were hired to serve as paraprofessional staff members on each floor. Originally referred to as "counselors" or "advisors," these positions eventually came to be known by the title "resident assistant" (with few exceptions). This method of staffing found favor in most colleges and universities, primarily because of the availability of qualified students. Usually these positions have been held by upper-level students who have leadership abilities and appear to have a definite interest in helping other students. In addition, paraprofessional positions have been seen as cost-effective for the institution. Housing officers quickly determined that with proper selection and training, these students could become effective at accomplishing a whole host of tasks that are helpful to students and, at the same time, meet the needs of the university.

Overshadowing these two reasons for the existence of RAs is a third reason, which recently has been supported by more than one research study. Resident assistants have been found to have a significant impact on student development. These studies have indicated that RAs who are specifically trained and encouraged to assist students can have a significant impact on student development. It seems logical to conclude that for the average college student the majority of this impact could be felt during the first college year.
In order to take full advantage of paraprofessional staffing, it is important to ensure a

certain amount of quality control within the paraprofessional program. Quality control can be accomplished through several means including the proper selection of staff, appropriate preparation and training for the position, and, most important, diligent supervision.

Resident assistant selection should include the appropriate use of an application, references, and individual or group interviews. Adequate opportunity should be provided for the candidates to exhibit their personal characteristics and views of matters related to student life in the residence halls. The process should be designed to select those individuals relatively free from biases, prejudices, and fixed perspectives on issues. If RAs are going to be helpful to first-year students, they must be open and accepting of individual differences, alternative lifestyles, and varying perspectives (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1990).

After RAs are selected, a training program should be developed in order to prepare each individual for the tasks ahead. The best RA training programs are a combination of sessions held prior to the assumption of the position and a continuing series of programs after the position is taken, commonly referred to as "in-service" or "continuing education." If a special effort is to be directed toward first-year students, this effort should become part of all aspects of the preparation program.

The final aspect of quality control in any RA program is supervision. Due to the very nature of a paraprofessional position, it is necessary that adequate and appropriate supervision be provided. Because of the inexperience and level of maturity of most RAs, some errors in judgment will be made that must be anticipated. Resident assistants may also experience motivational problems and will need occasional support and encouragement (Upcraft & Pilato, 1982).

If properly selected, trained, and supervised, RAs can positively influence students, particularly first-year students, in a number of ways. One of the advantages of using undergraduate RAs is to enhance the identification of first-year students with the RA because of a smaller difference in age. The RA is also in a position in which he or she can easily remember the challenges, fears, and feelings of concern that new students experience. Generally, the first-year student will determine that the RA has been selected to represent the university and the residence hall system; therefore, the new student can conclude that this person must embody the attitudes and characteristics deemed desirable by the university (Chickering, 1974).

Role Modeling

Role modeling is a concept covered in most RA training programs. The importance of role modeling is taught to RAs in order to take advantage of the identification between students. RAs should be instructed that role modeling takes place nearly every hour of the day, both in and out of the residence hall and both on and off campus. Generally, the behavior exhibited by a RA is viewed by new students as acceptable or desired, and RAs must realize that their everyday behavior sets an example for students. Students should observe the RA managing multiple time commitments while still reserving an appropriate amount of time for study. New students will conclude that this is the way to be successful in a college or university.

The overall relationship between the RA and students on the floor is also important in determining the influence of the RA on the students. In order to achieve a level of maximum influence, an RA should make every effort to get to know each individual personally. The staff member must also exhibit an attitude of receptiveness to the students. Floor members must feel that they can approach the RA with any question or problem. If an RA is aloof or too much of an authoritarian, the chances of influencing students will be reduced.

Zirkle and Hudson (1975) at Pennsylvania State University studied the influence of RAs who had been identified as counselor-oriented as opposed to RAs who had been identified as administrator-oriented. The researchers measured the change in maturity level of students on various floors and found that those living on the floors with counselor-oriented RAs showed the greatest changes. The researchers concluded that, among other things, the students on these floors had more contact with their RAs compared to the students on other floors. This study seems to support the fact that RAs can have an influence on the development of students on the floor and that the nature of the relationship between the RA and the floor will determine, to some degree, the extent of that influence.

Obviously, training RAs to engage in student contact is particularly important in assisting new students. If RAs can be encouraged and motivated to engage new students regularly in discussion on almost any topic, the end result can be positive. It seems imperative to indicate to RAs that the quantity and quality of student contact can make a difference to the success or failure of many new students.

Retention Intervention

Paraprofessional staff in the RA position have a unique opportunity to be of assistance to first-year students on their floor. Noel (1984) has indicated that the research on retention points to the possibility of a unique role for the RA. He has suggested that the title RA, in addition to denoting resident assistant, perhaps should also denote the resident assistant as "retention agent." Research by Beal and Noel (1980) indicates that one of the most significant factors impacting the retention of the freshman student is a caring attitude on the part of faculty and staff. In making this statement, Noel (1984) clearly indicates that when educators speak of a caring attitude on the part of faculty and staff, RAs should be included as part of the staff configuration. It is logical that RAs could even compensate for an indifferent attitude in other parts of the institution. Well-trained RAs have an excellent opportunity to exhibit a caring attitude toward first-year students on their floor.

Clearly there are limitations on the amount of time an RA can actually spend with students. However, RAs could briefly visit with several first-year students each day to offer an encouraging word and an indication of personal interest and concern. Such visits would help RAs obtain an indication of how things are going and whether or not there are any particular problems. Resident assistants should be informed as to their ability to impact first-year student retention and the implementation of retention strategies. Resident assistants may respond positively to such a challenge to use this information to try to increase the retention of freshman students (Noel, Levitz, & Saluri, 1985).

Stressing Involvement

Most residence hall staff are familiar with a number of studies that have repeatedly detailed the advantages that accrue to students who live on campus versus those who live off campus or commute from home. There are several forces working concurrently that highlight these advantages. The most potent of those forces is the student's involvement in university activities. Students who live on campus tend to be more involved in the university and its activities than those who do not (Astin, 1973).

Educators have begun to recognize the impact of involvement and are now openly encouraging students to become involved as a means of improving their chances of college success. Involvement may encompass participation in any type of campus activity—from playing in the college band to participating in a club or organization. Further, it has been shown that involvement may include any type of on-campus employment. By becoming involved in the university beyond the classroom, the student begins to identify with the university and develops an increasing desire to remain in the environment. In effect, involvement eases the transition to the college lifestyle. Increasingly, the student becomes a part of the environment and will make every effort to remain.

If involvement is effective, it is a legitimate tool to assist students in becoming adapted to the college experience. Resident assistants are in an excellent position to encourage new students to become involved in various kinds of campus activities. Historically, fraternities and sororities have urged, persuaded, and required pledges to become involved in campus activities. For the most part, the motivation for this effort was based upon advancing the reputation of the organization on campus. Through this effort fraternities and sororities have probably done much to encourage the retention of their members.

Clearly then, an institution would benefit from launching a campaign to encourage involvement through the persistent efforts of its RA staff. Resident assistants are presently accustomed to encouraging floor members to participate in orientation and related activities the first week or two of the fall term. If RAs were given an objective of continuing the effort to encourage involvement for the first six weeks of the term, results could be even more positive in terms of increased retention.

Freshman Adjustment Problems

The quality of the contact between an RA and a student depends upon several factors. One of the more important of these factors would be the RA's level of awareness of the types of problems that first-year students often experience.

The transition from high school to college requires many adjustments for the first-year student. Several adjustment problems are fairly common and can be anticipated. If alerted to common problems, RAs can be ready to assist at the outset. Resident assistants should be made aware of the various resources on campus available to students. Most importantly, RAs should be made aware that adjustment problems are common and that most first-year students experience these problems to some degree.

Self-Esteem Needs

Self-esteem is of critical importance to students of high school and college age. Although students tend to establish a sense of identity in high school, a college student with new friends and new classmates must engage in the process all over again. Since college is somewhat selective, the challenges in this area may be greater and may, in fact, be threatening. Some students engage in unacceptable or high-risk behavior as a part of this process. Resident assistants can be most helpful in this area in several ways. If properly alerted, an RA can recognize these efforts at establishing identity and can respond accordingly. An RA who becomes acquainted with the members of the floor can encourage the grouping of individuals for certain activities or tasks and ensure that individuals who are socially inept are included. An RA may also engage a student in appropriate conversation at a time when the student is experiencing stress related to social pressures. This may be a particularly good time for role modeling to have an impact. Appropriate reminiscing about one's own past concerns and experiences may be helpful. Comfort and support is of particular importance to new students at this time.

Roommate Adjustments

First-time meetings between roommates can be a tense experience. Many students find themselves in this situation since they have not chosen a roommate prior to coming to college. The experience is often complicated by parents who are present when students move into their new home. Left alone, the majority of students can begin to adjust to each other within a reasonable period of time.

However, some problems do continue, and some roommates find that they are incompatible. RAs must be sensitive to roommate problems and try to assist both individuals in resolving their differences. The staff member must also be conversant with university policy on room changes in the event that the two individuals cannot resolve their differences. There is nothing worse than a roommate situation that is allowed to continue to the point that one of the two parties decides to leave the institution. Having a reasonably compatible roommate is critical to the success of most new students. Consequently, roommate compatibility is an area of possible conflict that must be carefully attended to by the RA and other residence hall staff. Hall staff must be cautioned not to assume falsely that all problems can be resolved through discussion. Some differences are simply too great and must be recognized as such.

Due to increasing affluence and smaller size of the average American family, many students now come to college without having the prior experience of sharing a room with a sibling. Undoubtedly these students' lack of experience will create problems for many new students.

Homesickness

Homesickness is a term commonly used to refer to a sense of loss or aloneness when the student is separated from the family unit. Some students are more prepared for this transition than others and therefore are quicker to adapt. Others adapt more slowly and may need to make frequent weekend visits home before the process is complete. Again, the primary function of the floor staff member is to be alert to the possibility of homesickness and to be ready to assist when necessary. Homesickness is not always evident because most students are reluctant to admit they are experiencing this problem.

RAs can assist homesick students by encouraging involvement in activities with other students on the floor. This is particularly important on weekends when there are no regularly scheduled classes to take up time. Often, other students on the floor, particularly upper-level students, can be helpful with this type of problem if they are made aware of the situation.

Of greatest concern is a homesickness situation that is allowed to continue to the point that the student can no longer function effectively in the academic environment. If this occurs, the student may be quick to make the decision that college is not the place for him or her and may decide to return home. While this is inevitable in a few situations, many students can be encouraged to continue if staff are alerted to the problem at an early stage.

Academic Adjustments

The collegiate academic environment is quite different from that of high school and as such requires considerable adjustment. The increased level of competition, a different type of class schedule, and an increased demand for advanced skills may produce considerable anxiety. College students must develop new study skills in a very short period of time if they are to be successful. Resident assistants must be alerted to the various campus resources that can assist in the development of good study skills. Hall staff should also develop programs related to study skills, test taking, and stress reduction.

Adjustment to Freedom

Students come to the university with considerable differences in the amount of experience they have had in making personal decisions. A college environment presents many opportunities to make decisions regarding personal freedom. Students who do not make this adjustment rapidly may find that their academic performance will suffer. Some students overreact to the new freedom and make very poor decisions, and these individuals need help in realizing the long-range impact of their actions.

Again, role modeling on the part of the RA is most helpful. Often, upper-level students can be enlisted to assist with this type of problem and to assist in the presentation of programs regarding time management and related subjects.

Problems with Parents

Separation from one's parents, although viewed positively by some students, is often a source of anxiety. The extent to which this is a problem depends directly upon the nature of the past relationship. Most students make the separation in stages that occur over the first and second year of college. Some students experience considerable frustration because parents may not make the transition during the same period of time as the student. Parents and students must work together if the relationship between them is going to begin to mature into a more adult form.

Increasing problems with parents are further complicated in situations involving divorce. RAs should be careful when offering specific advice to a student with respect to the relationship with parents. Sometimes sharing personal experiences can be helpful, but often a referral to the counseling center may be most appropriate. In any event, RAs should be both sensitive to these kinds of problems and good listeners.

Social Adjustments

There are several different types of social adjustments that can be significant to the new student, but one that is of major importance to the RA is the student's ability to interact with other floor members. Students with less experience and fewer social skills may have some difficulty interacting and becoming a member of a subgroup on the floor. Students with this type of problem will often manifest behavioral responses in an extreme fashion. They may often exhibit what is referred to as introverted or extroverted behavior. The introverted student may simply withdraw from relationships on the floor as a means of coping. The extrovert, on the other hand, may constantly be roaming the floor visiting students, interrupting, and making a nuisance of himself or herself. Either form of coping may have negative outcomes and can result in a student being resented by other members of the floor. If left to progress, the situation can often create a significant floor problem that will consume an inordinant amount of an RA's time. It is important that RAs be alerted to watch for individuals with social problems and that they attempt to deal with these situations or seek help in dealing with them before they develop into extreme situations.

Adjustments Related to Sex

Another type of common problem experienced by new students is difficulty in getting along with members of the opposite sex. Students with little prior experience may have difficulty relating to the opposite sex in fairly common situations. If ignored, these problems can create considerable stress and anxiety because of the emphasis that is placed upon dating and the establishment of relationships with the opposite sex. One's ability to establish proper relationships with the opposite sex has a significant impact on the development of overall self-esteem. Students experiencing difficulty need help and straightforward, practical advice.

Students often look to the RA for some assistance in this area. Again, role modeling is of extreme importance, and every RA should be taught that his or her relationships with a member of the opposite sex are always under some scrutiny by new students. A request for some assistance in this area should not be taken lightly or tossed off with a witty remark or comment. Resident assistants should be instructed about the importance of this area to students' self-esteem so that they may respond accordingly.

The RA may also have to be concerned with issues of sexual orientation. Students who are still struggling with sexual orientation may need someone in whom they can confide. If the RA is not ready to accept this responsibility, he or she must be ready to make an appropriate referral so that the student can find someone with whom to talk.

Floor members may need some assistance in accepting individuals who have a different sexual orientation. Homophobia is often made manifest through behavior that can be extremely offensive and also disruptive to the floor. Resident assistants need to be instructed and provided with the necessary information to allow them to resolve these issues within themselves so that they can assist other students. Part of the RA training program could include a session with gay and lesbian students.

While these are the major problems common to first-year students, other problems may also occur such as illness, financial difficulty, family problems, etc. In a few instances, new students may have to deal with very complex issues such as unintended pregnancy, the threat of AIDS, sexual assault, and issues related to cultural differences. All of these possible issues should be included as a part of the RA preparation program.

Developmental Process

In addition to specific information concerning adjustment problems of first-year students, RAs should have some general information concerning the developmental process of college students. An overview of developmental concepts discussed in Chapter 4 of this monograph will provide RAs with some understanding of why students exhibit certain kinds of behavior.

Resident assistants need to know that the developmental process is ongoing. Occurring over time, development is generally sequential in nature. During the college years, and in particular the first and second years, students should be progressing in certain areas of their development. Different theorists may provide slightly different lists of developmental factors, but for the most part, there is agreement that students are working on such areas as autonomy and the development of personal identity. Students are also practicing how to manage their emotions and learning how to improve their skills in interpersonal relationships.

In order to be effective, RAs need a basic understanding of these and other developmental processes that are taking place among college students. This information can be of assistance to the RA in understanding and appreciating the transitions being made by students living in the residence halls.

Conclusion

Paraprofessional staff can and should have an impact on the adjustment, development, and retention of new students. While the details of a resident assistant program have been presented, the key elements of this program can and should be incorporated into any paraprofessional program. Careful selection, training, and supervision of paraprofessional staff are critical. Key elements of the training program should include role modeling, the concept of involvement, and the importance of exhibiting a caring attitude toward students. While some paraprofessional staff are motivated through remuneration, it is entirely possible to operate a successful program on a volunteer basis. Paraprofessional staff may be sufficiently motivated due to their academic interests, other life experiences, or the reputation of the program itself. Paraprofessional staff are an effective and efficient means of assisting new students in their adjustment to the university.

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Chapter 7

Residence Life Programming and the First-Year Experience

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This chapter addresses the following goals as outlined in the Introduction:

3 Provide high quality residential facilities and programs which enhance new student retention and academic success

4 Provide opportunities for informal out-of-class contact between faculty and new students

7 Provide social and educational programs which help students fulfill academic and developmental competencies

10 Develop a strong sense of community and support for new students within individual living units

Residence hall programming can offer valuable learning opportunities for first-year students. Many of the needs new students have can be addressed through a programming model designed to enhance the residential first year. Programming must be developed with an intentional plan to address the needs of new students throughout their entire first-year experience.

Since the early years of the student personnel profession, the charge for those working in this field has been clear. Through *The Student Personnel Point of View* (President's Commission on Higher Education, 1948) professionals understand their role as co-curricular educators:

> The realization of this objective—the full maturing of each student—cannot be attained without interest in integrated efforts toward the development of each and every facet of his (or her) personality and potentialities.

It is the responsibility of the student affairs administrator to create and encourage programs and services that assist the student in the many dimensions of his/her development.

The student affairs professional must first understand the needs of students before providing direction for programs and services. Upon arriving on campus, students interact with both the academic and the social systems (Tinto, 1987). The higher the degree of student integration into these college systems, the greater will be student commitment to the specific institution and to the goal of college completion (Tinto, 1987). While primary responsibility for the academic system rests with the faculty, student affairs professionals are most often called upon to help the student become integrated into the campus social system.

Living in campus residence halls is one of the most significant factors that has an impact on the level of students' social integration into college (Tinto, 1975). Residential status is also a factor in increasing student persistence in college (Chickering, 1974; Thomas & Andes, 1987). The importance of the residential environment is especially highlighted in the first year of college (Astin, 1985).

Lee Upcraft (1984) cites the following tasks as essential for first-year students to address for fulfillment of their educational and personal goals:

- ✓ developing academic and intellectual competence,
- ✓ establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships,
- ✓ developing an identity,
- ✓ deciding on a career and a lifestyle,
- ✓ maintaining personal health and wellness,
- ✓ developing an integrated philosophy of life.

First-year students who begin processing these tasks will undoubtedly increase their chances for success. While these six tasks may be confronted in many ways and settings, the environment of the supervised residence hall provides significant opportunities for the challenge and support students need to develop to their potential.

One of the methods used to provide for students' growth is formalized residence hall programming. In 1986, the Council for the Advancement of Standards for Student Services/Development Programs (CAS) called attention to a programmatic emphasis:

> The residential life program is an integral part of the educational program and academic support services of the institution. The mission must include provision for educational programs and services, residential facilities, management, and, where appropriate, food services.

Thus, the responsibilities of the residence hall professional go far beyond providing room and board to students. Professional and paraprofessional staff members are an extension of the academic mission of the institution. Through this chapter, the authors will address this role and will outline a plan for providing the programs first-year students need in order to succeed.

TYPES OF PROGRAMMING

A program can be defined as an intentional event designed to enhance students' learning and development. While educators have formed many alternate views of objectives, programming takes place in three primary categories: educational, social, and service. This paradigm helps professionals in residence halls make sense of the complex nature of their work, as called for by Blimling and Miltenberger (1990):

> . . .(P)ractitioners in residence hall work have had to become more sophisticated in their approaches to structuring . . . peer environments and more analytical in assessing the value of the residence hall environment.

Emphasizing educational, social, and service aspects for programming provides the broad framework required to meet students' needs. Coupling this concept with the notion of "front-loading," or putting the strongest, most student-centered people, programs, and services in the first year (Levitz & Noel, 1989) will help to ensure an environment that meets the unique needs of first-year students.

Educational Programming

Ernest Boyer, President of the Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching, concluded in a major report on the status of undergraduate education (1987) that the college of quality remains a place where the curricular and co-curricular have a relationship to one another. Effective educational programs can provide an important bridge for students between their experiences in traditional classroom settings and their out-of-class learning. Educational programs are also designed to teach students new knowledge or skills and enhance their present abilities. As this type of programming extends to all kinds of learning, it is an extremely broad framework for staff to utilize.

Social Programming

First-year students, to a greater degree than students at other levels of the college experience, have a need for social success. Belonging is integral to each student's sense of inclusion within a community (Roberts & Brown, 1989). Social events in the residence halls are designed to provide opportunities for entertainment, fun, and mixing with other students. The latter is especially critical to first-year students who are seeking an understanding of their place within the institution and with other students. These types of programs may include dances, picnics, parties, and recreational games.

Service Programming

Increasingly, students are giving attention to service within the campus or local community. In his book, *On Leadership,* John Gardner (1990) points out:

> (W)e must persuade our . . . colleges that whatever they may teach young people in the way of specialized skills, they must also equip them with something broader—and not just for the sake of future leadership. The students are to be citizens, the most generalist of occupations.

This citizenship focus provides a sound mandate that students participate in "other-oriented" activities. Service programs could include volunteering time to local social service agencies, raising money for causes, or initiating projects such as a hall recycling program.

APPROACHES TO PROGRAMMING

The delivery method used to provide information may be as critical as the information itself.

This is particularly true since this culture is bombarded with information; student affairs professionals need to give special consideration to the delivery method in order to be creative enough to compete for the attention of the music-television generation. The authors have identified two distinct approaches to programming—active and passive.

Active Programming

Active programming utilizes the physical and emotional presence and investment of both the presenter and the students to be effective. In this type of programming, active involvement predominates. Within this category are three specific initiatives: one-shot programming, theme programming, and faculty-involvement programming.

One-Shot Programming

This is, by far, the most common approach utilized by residence hall staffs. One-shot programs involve a staff member who determines a need in the campus community and arranges for a specific program to address this need. The program itself is not connected to other initiatives on campus.

An example of this type of outreach may be the presentation of a program in September about getting along with your roommate and a program in October on alcohol awareness. Both of these topics address concerns of the students within the campus community. These programs, however, are planned in isolation from other activities within the hall or campus. All three programming types—educational, social, and service—can be delivered by this method, although it is most effective for educational and social initiatives.

Theme Programming

Theme programming occurs when two or more programs are planned within a given time frame (i.e., a week, a month, a year) on a related topic. These programs are especially effective when connected to national recognition days and months so as to focus student attention on the topic at hand. Below are a few examples of how theme programming for first-year students can be incorporated in a residential hall:

✦*Survival Month.* New students' ability to complete successfully their first year on campus depends upon the skills they have acquired that help them to "survive." Dedicating a month to helping students become acquainted with their new environment could incorporate the following ideas:

- ✓ campus and city tours,
- ✓ how to get along with your roommate,
- ✓ room decoration,
- ✓ dealing with homesickness and loneliness,
- ✓ coping with long-distance relationships,
- ✓ how to study,
- ✓ how to write a paper,
- ✓ how to take notes,
- ✓ how to talk with your professor,
- ✓ stress management,
- ✓ time management,
- ✓ how to meet people,
- ✓ safety issues.

✦*Safety Month.* (See Chapter 9.) Living on campus does not guarantee students' safety. Recent surveys have indicated that the campus crime rate is more than double that of the general population. Students, especially first-year students, are often naive about risks of living on campus.

Safety month programming could include

- ✓ sexual assault and date/acquaintance rape,
- ✓ sex under the influence,
- ✓ safe campus walking routes,
- ✓ door-locking campaign,
- ✓ property engraving,
- ✓ self-defense,
- ✓ assertiveness.

✦*Alcohol Awareness Week.* Alcohol abuse has become widely recognized as a leading threat to the health and well-being of college students (Goodale, 1986; Ingalls, 1982; Sherwood, 1987). College campuses do not create the alcohol problem, they inherit it. However, the responsibility of student affairs administrators is to educate students about responsible decision making and intervene with those students who have serious alcohol-related problems. Programs can address these and other similar areas at any time, but may be best planned during the annual National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week in October. This is an excellent example of residence hall staffs' utilizing a national campaign to increase the effectiveness of the campus educational effort.

Faculty Involvement Programming

This type of active programming involves bringing faculty into the residence hall setting to provide an educational program, dine with students, participate in student social activities, etc. Initiatives to enhance faculty interaction in the residence halls are met with varying success across the nation. There is little question, however, that students benefit from this exposure. Students who have contact with faculty outside of the classroom are more likely to persist to graduation (Astin, 1977; Bean, 1980), exhibit higher levels of achievement (Centra & Rock, 1971), and are generally more satisfied with college (Astin, 1977; Pascarella, 1980). The responsibility for increasing faculty involvement within the halls belongs largely to the student affairs professional.

> If student affairs organizations offer to involve faculty in the education of students outside of the classroom, and if it is done with sensitivity, professionalism, and genuineness; with proper timing, clarity of purpose, involvement and recognition; the faculty will choose to be involved. Clearly, this partnership requires that the seeds be planted and the groundwork laid by student affairs. (Carpenter, Paterson, Kibler, & Paterson, 1990)

The outline Carpenter et al. (1990) provide is an excellent overview of the essential elements of outreach to the institution's teaching faculty.

Passive Programming

Unlike active programming, passive programming does not require the presence of the person delivering the material. Passive programming is pervasive in our society, extending to all types of the media, postings, and banners.

Passive programming in the residence halls has long been significant; however, few professionals in the field have given it attention as a viable alternative to active programming. Passive programming has many benefits including the following:

- ✓ reaches the student who for reasons of scheduling, disinterest, or resistance to the material refuses to attend an active program;
- ✓ remains more memorable because of the repetition of its message (e.g., a student passes an educational bulletin

board about AIDS every day and receives a valuable message);

✓ provides a stimulus for ongoing, informal discussions within the residential community.

Three primary delivery methods in the passive programming arena are publications, other printed material, and campaigns.

Publications

Every effort should be made to provide consistent messages in publications of the residence life program. The content of handbooks and guidebooks should receive the utmost attention, both in terms of the written and visual images presented. Publications should be prepared that are readable for the intended audience (i.e., written at an appropriate verbal level). Stand-alone publications can be created about any educational topic. Also, floor or hall newsletters help acclimate students to the community and keep them informed of upcoming events.

Other Printed Material

Among the materials that fall into this category are posters, banners, and flyers. These devices can present information on virtually any topic. The effectiveness of these delivery methodologies hinges on the following:

✦*Information should be brief.* The intention of these materials is to provide an overview which may result in students' seeking further information on their own at a later date.

✦*Information should be presented in a creative manner*. Utilizing the techniques of professionals in advertising—bright colors, themes, recognizable and repetitive messages—enhances the potential that the information will get student attention.

✦*Information should be prominently placed.* The location of material is a major determinant in its potential to be noticed, or in the case of brochures, picked up. High traffic areas are generally excellent locations. However, if an area has too much traffic, students will give attention to the other people in the area rather than the printed material. High-profile bulletin boards and restroom stalls are excellent posting areas. If university policy allows, stuffing student mailboxes and placing material under student doors can also be highly effective.

Campaigns

Creating materials that are part of a campaign serves to bridge the gap between active and passive programming. Publications that complement active one-shot and theme programming can easily be created. During Survival Month, for example, student affairs professionals could create booklets that encourage roommate discussions around particularly difficult transitional issues (i.e., sleeping and study habits, expectations, backgrounds, academic and personal goals for the first year). Such a booklet could serve as either a starting point for an active discussion program within the living group or as follow-up to a floor meeting regarding roommate relationships.

TRAINING STAFF TO PROGRAM

While the importance of providing quality programming is well recognized, motivating staff members to follow through is not an easy task. The provision of excellent first-year student programming must begin with a commitment from the college or university. Administrators cannot simply require staff members to provide programs. The professional staff must also ensure that there is adequate financial and supply support to meet the expectations of programming in the residence halls. Most importantly, however, administrators must teach staffs why programming is important and how to do it successfully in a positive, upbeat, involvement-oriented approach.

Student Development Approach

All student development theories are available for use and application to programming in the residential setting. The work of Arthur Chickering (1974) is most readily applicable and accessible to an undergraduate-level staff.

Chickering's seven developmental vectors should be examined and illustrated in detail for members of the staff. During this phase of the training, staff members can brainstorm characteristics of people in each vector, resulting in a list of student developmental needs. The vector "developing autonomy," for example, might result in the following ideas from the staff:

- ✓ assertion training,
- ✓ leadership training,
- ✓ time management,
- ✓ self-esteem workshops,
- ✓ dealing with homesickness,
- ✓ financial management.

As each vector is explored, a rationale for programming will become evident, as will a list of potential topics.

Utilizing the student development approach is especially effective for staffs dealing in predominantly first-year student environments. Through the discussion of Chickering's theory, it should become apparent that first-year students have two specific issues that need attention: developing competence and autonomy. Programs that go far beyond these developmental levels may prove ineffective for the first-year student population. As a result of this training effort, staff will likely create programming that meets student needs and helps to keep everyone in the community involved and motivated.

Needs-Based Approach

The second model for helping staff understand and process the rationale for programming is the needs-based approach. Using this technique, the staff helps to create a student monthly stress calendar that identifies the needs that students have during specific times of the year.

To engage staff in the process of creating such a calendar, begin by having the group brainstorm the important dates of the coming year (i.e., vacation schedules, testing periods, university-wide events). Follow this by providing a list of major religious holidays and important recognition days/months (e.g., National Coming Out Day, National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week, Black History Month). The next step is to involve the staff in a process of brainstorming the emotional ebb and flow of students during the academic year. Finally, using this information collectively, identify programming issues which present themselves over the course of the year. A sample of the calendar that may result is shown in the Appendix.

Issue-Based Approach

This final training approach emphasizes the issues that professional staff know need to be addressed, whether or not students perceive the need. Typical issues that might fall into this category are AIDS, diversity appreciation, eating disorders, sexual assault and rape, substance abuse, relationship violence, as well as gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues.

In order to ensure that these programs are offered in the residence halls, several effective steps can be taken. First, the presence of a resource booklet can help eliminate staff fears about confronting such difficult areas. The booklet should include program topics, program outlines, speakers available on the campus and in the local community, video resources, and samples of passive programming materials. Second, directors can take advantage of theme programming to involve more staff in the process of creating programming around these issues. This is especially effective if staffs utilize existing recognition days/months as a starting point for implementing issue-based programming.

With issue-based programming it is especially important to be sensitive to the developmental and awareness level of the staff. Issue-based programming is vital and deserves attention in residence hall settings; however, the politically-charged environments of some campuses mandate that the professional staff work initially within their staff's comfort zones. Providing excellent issue-based programming may require a commitment of staff development time to the topics before they become a part of the forum of discussion within the residential community.

MOTIVATING STAFFS TO ENGAGE IN PROGRAMMING

Once staffs have an understanding of the importance of planning and presenting programs, attention must be given to maintaining their level of commitment throughout the academic year. John Naisbitt, in his 1984 book *Megatrends*, refers to two approaches to motivation—high touch and high tech. Higher education can learn from the business world by incorporating these concepts in working with residence hall staffs.

High Touch Approach

The high touch approach can be incredibly powerful in motivating student affairs staff. This is often the most neglected method, for some professionals believe that merely requiring staff to plan and execute programs should provide sufficient motivation. However, in order to maximize the full potential of staffs, extra efforts must be made. These begin with an enthusiastic commitment to programming by the chief housing officer, and this can be best demonstrated by appointing a full- or part-time staff member to programming. This professional needs to have time, talent, and genuine enthusiasm for programming. The latter is necessary because students can detect the difference between someone with sincere dedication and someone who merely fulfills a job requirement. An openly enthusiastic program administrator can inspire programming excellence among the professional and paraprofessional staff.

A recurring theme in the book *In Search of Excellence* (Peters & Waterman, 1982) is the importance of rewarding desirable behavior. Giving paraprofessional staff members recognition each time they plan a program is an effective high touch method for getting results. Rewards can extend from a simple note of thanks, to monthly or semester awards, to an appointment into "a hall of fame for excellence in programming." Rewards are important because people will lose their commitment to a project when they realize that good performance does not make any difference (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

High Tech Approach

This approach involves providing resources that help the staff succeed. Designating an area as a programming resource room helps significantly. Within this room, resources such as clip art, a computer, a copy machine, a button-making machine, educational videos, and resource materials enhance the staff's ability and willingness to plan and carry out programs. Construction paper and markers are not all that is necessary to create competitive materials that spark the residents' interest in programs.

Creating resource materials such as a list of presenters, suggested program topics, publicity ideas, and resources available in the community can help as well. These resources can be categorized by the training approach being used, either student development, student needs, or issues. Student and professional staff members want to be successful in their programming efforts, but they need help to facilitate their achievement. The adequately supplied resource room can make a significant difference.

The success of implementing these motivational techniques can be measured. For instance, at the University of Missouri-Columbia the total number of programs offered has increased by nearly tenfold in five years. At Washington State University, where extensive efforts have been in place only in the last year, programming has increased by a third.

CONCLUSION

Providing a living and learning environment for residents, especially first-year students, does not happen simply because they live in a building together. Student development is greatly enhanced by the implementation of programs designed to meet the unique needs and interests of first-year students. A well-trained and motivated staff is a key ingredient in creating an environment that complements the educational mission of the institution and assists in campus retention efforts.

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Appendix

A Needs-Based Approach to Programming for the First Year of College

COMMON ISSUES AND CONCERNS	POTENTIAL PROGRAMS
September	
Homesickness	Transitions/orientation program
Loneliness	Mixers and social events
Feelings of being lost	Campus and community tours
Not understanding boundaries	Question/answer session
Values crisis from conflicts	Values clarification workshop
Fears about dating relationships	Effective relationship presentation
Wondering how and if I will "fit in"	Small group discussions on floors
Roommate conflicts	Roommate discussion guide
Money concerns; do I have enough?	Budget planning workshop
Pre-conceptions of college life challenged	Weekend retreat to address expectations and opportunities
Feelings of academic inadequacy	Study skills sessions
Fears over first tests and papers	Study groups for new students
Coping with large classes	Tips on note-taking in lectures
October	
Depression	Post counseling center information in hall
Loneliness	Mixers and social events
Homesickness continuing	Weekend activities in the hall
Relationship problems	Communication workshops
Pressure to have sexual intercourse	Assertiveness training

Appendix (continued)

Too much partying	Responsible drinking signage
Pressures to use alcohol/other drugs	Alcohol Awareness Week events
Money problems realized	Personal budget contracting
Becoming over-extended	Time management workshop
Feelings of not being successful	Congratulations notes to new students for getting through their first month in a new environment
Gaining weight	A "Dining-In Health" guide
Questioning whether to drop classes	Posting drop/add information
Questioning choice of major	A college majors fair in the hall
Conflicts with instructors/professor	Conflict management workshop
Fear over mid-terms	Study skills sessions
Academic disappointment from initial grades received	Specialized study sessions arranged for new students

November/ December

Depression; when will I adjust?	Counseling staff available for one-on-one contact in the halls
Burn-out	A special new-student-only program identifying successes thus far
Missing being home to prepare for the holidays	Holiday preparations and events in the hall and community
Worries about returning home	Transitions for "going-home" programs
Religious conflicts	Religious diversity programming
Increase in alcohol abuse	Posting alcohol abuse information
End-of-semester socials innumerable	Plan as a staff so as not to overextend student leaders

Appendix (continued)

Weight gain continues	Exercise program in lounges
Catching winter colds; illness from becoming over-tired	Fresh fruit and vegetable campaign in the dining halls
Money problems	Part-time job postings
Questioning whether to return to school or hall next semester	Decision-making workshop
Pre-registration concerns	Information prominently posted
Worries over finals and papers	More study skills sessions
Worries about grades	Stress management workshops

January/February

Stress of getting back into routine	Spring goal setting program
Missing family and home friends again	Un-birthday party in February
Missing college friends who did not return to the campus for spring semester	Mixers and social events for new and returning students
Valentine depression if not dating	Alternative Valentine events (e.g., movies, games, cooking party)
Adjusting to a new roommate	Repeat roommate discussion guide
Weight gain	Offer in-hall exercise class
Bad weather and "cabin fever"	Outdoor fun (e.g., skiing, sledding, or major indoor games nights)
Desire to get involved in campus life	Involvement fair in January
Burn-out in period between vacations	A weekend get-away planned
Pressure from home to improve grades	Goal setting/personal contracting
Possibly on academic probation	Faculty involvement programming
Mid-terms and papers create anxiety	Stress- and time-management skills addressed

Appendix (continued)

March

Depression if no spring break plans	De-emphasize travel and focus on having fun anywhere through bulletin boards, newsletters, etc.
Spring fever sets in	Outdoor concerts and events
Summer job search begins	Job fair for local agencies
Facing housing contract for next year	Living options for new year posted
Alcohol and drug abuse escalate. . . especially during spring break	Don't drink and drive campaign emphasized
Gained weight becomes evident	Eating disorders workshop
Money problems	A spring break budget planning session
Pre-registration concerns	Informal academic advising in hall
Mid-term panic	Study week established
Last time to drop a class	Information prominently posted
Questioning choice of major	Career fair

April/ May

Pressure over closing timetables	Stress- and time-management presentations
Anxiety over missing college friends while away for the summer	Creating a summer address list and floor newsletter
Concerns about moving home	Transitions program
Worries about adjustments with high school friends	A "How I've Changed This Year" guide addressing concern areas
Trying to decide whether or not to return to school for next year	Decision-making workshops
Summer job worries	Resumè and interviewing skills presented

Appendix (continued)

Not wanting to study due to good weather	Saturday in the Sun Study Session
Concerns about grades	Study-skills sessions
Finals	Formalized quiet weeks with planned study break events

Chapter 8

Leadership Education and the Residential First Year

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This chapter addresses the following goals as outlined in the Introduction:

3 Provide high quality residential facilities and programs which enhance student retention and academic success

4 Provide opportunities for informal out-of-class contact between faculty and new students

5 Provide meaningful involvement and leadership opportunities for new students

Teaching leadership skills has increasingly become a stated educational objective on many college and university campuses. For first-year students in particular, residence hall leadership opportunities offer numerous ways for them to learn valuable skills while becoming actively involved in the university community.

Becoming actively involved in residence hall student leadership positions provides tremendous benefits for new students. Active involvement allows new students to establish more meaningful connections with the institution while developing significant career and life skills (Astin, 1984, Boyer, 1987, National Institute of Education, 1984). In addition, the residence life department and the institution benefit through the creation of higher levels of meaningful student participation and ownership in program and policy development (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1990; Striffolino & Saunders, 1989). All of these benefits ultimately result in the development of a stronger sense of campus community (Boyer, 1990). This chapter will further describe these benefits and will recommend a series of components which should be part of a leadership education program designed for residential first-year students.

Currently, institutions of higher education are being challenged to develop students' leadership skills more effectively. Although the original purpose of higher education in the United States was to create an educated class of "leader-citizens," a leadership void has been identified recently within our society (Gardner, 1990). In addition, most colleges and universities include in their mission statements, either explicitly or implicitly, a commitment to developing leadership and citizenship skills in their students. In this era of accountability, higher education is increasingly being called upon to fulfill these stated purposes and roles.

Until recently, most institutions have approached leadership development as a natural by-product of the educational experience. There is little evidence to suggest that this strategy has succeeded. In fact, the recent resurgence of interest in leadership seems to indicate that this need is not being met through current academic programs. Leadership education needs to be an intentionally structured offering within the institution, both inside and outside of the classroom. Gardner (1990) states that whatever our colleges may teach young people in the way of specialized skills, colleges must also equip them with something broader - and not just for the sake of future leadership. The students are to be citizens, the most general of occupations.

Recently, many educators have become interested in developing curricular offerings in leadership studies within a variety of academic disciplines. For example, many campuses are developing interdisciplinary minors and majors in leadership. The importance of out-of-classroom co-curricular leadership experiences is also receiving attention. An American Telephone and Telegraph Human Resources Study Group (1984) found that collegiate leadership experiences were more powerful predictors of managerial success than were college grades or selectivity of the college attended. In addition, Astin (1984) has found that high levels of involvement in the campus community lead to increased persistence among students and foster a sense of belonging.

Although leadership education is receiving new-found recognition and credibility on our campuses, residence life programs have a long history of contributing to the development of large numbers of student leaders. The intensity and quality of leadership opportunities traditionally offered in residential programs typically cannot be duplicated in other settings, either inside or outside of the classroom. The high level of involvement, ownership, and community development that occurs through participation in residence life positions contributes significantly to creating a strong identity with the department and the institution. In order to have the greatest impact, new students must actively be encouraged to participate in leadership positions as they enter the campus community. The residential setting is the ideal environment for initiating new students into leadership and involvement on campus.

Therefore, involvement in residential leadership opportunities is most applicable to the needs and capabilities of students in the first year of college. Striffolino and Saunders (1989) state that new students are an important target for leadership development efforts. A leadership program creates a norm within the campus culture that enables first-year students to contribute to their college community in a meaningful way. Setting the tone for active involvement early in the college career has a dual benefit: enhancing the intellectual and social development of individual students while creating a lively, inviting campus environment.

Benefits of First-Year Residential Leadership Opportunities

Student Benefits

Participation in practical skill development opportunities. Leadership education should provide meaningful involvement for new students. Opportunities should be structured intentionally so that students are aware of the skill development benefits available to them. Quite often, students become aware of these benefits after their student leadership experiences are over. Proactive structuring of these skill development opportunities assists students in developing skills and capabilities related to the career and citizenship responsibilities they will assume after leaving the college or university. This structuring also allows new students to begin to make connections between in-class and out-of-class experiences.

Participation in a wide variety of leadership and involvement positions. Residential leadership opportunities for first-year students provide a means for them to investigate a variety of campus activities without over-commitment, allowing students to "test the waters" and assess potential opportunities for involvement during their sophomore, junior, and senior years. The high levels of enthusiasm many new students exhibit can be channeled into "entry level" leadership positions at the floor or hall level. Mentoring contacts with advisors and upper-level students will also enable new students to have contact with future opportunities, such as paraprofessional positions and organizational executive positions, into which they can move as they progress through their college careers. It is important that advisors assist students in developing a pattern of involvement that will help first-year students plan the positions in which they would like to become involved, thus maximizing the benefits from their experiences.

Participation in an environment that is safe and familiar. The residence hall environment allows new students to become involved where they live. Opportunities in the residence hall environment may initially be viewed as less "risky" than involvement in other areas of campus. Taking that first step into leadership and involvement opportunities can be intimidating for a new student. The residential environment, particularly the student's own floor or house, can be a very "safe" starting point.

Becoming part of a group and fostering a strong sense of belonging to the living unit and the institution. Serving in first-year leadership positions is generally a catalyst for developing strong ties with the residential community and the university at large. Anderson (1980) states that the choices students make regarding their involvement in leadership positions can have an important impact on friendships that develop, the focus of a student's non-academic life, the time available for all pursuits (including academic), and the development of marketable skills through practical experience. A student's general sense of accomplishment and sense of value in the university community may be closely linked to these choices. The obvious benefit of new student service in these positions should be recognized and expanded; the rewards for the student and the university are significant.

Creating ownership in the operation of the institution. Striffolino and Saunders (1989) state that new student leadership programs not only enhance individual student development; institutions derive benefits from having a well-educated cadre of student leaders as well. Vaill's (1982) research indicates that strong and clear leadership is an important characteristic of a highly effective organization. According to Vaill (1982), committed and skilled student leaders contribute to the establishment of successful campus clubs and organizations. An effective leadership education program, particularly one that begins in the first year of college, can be instrumental in assuring that student voices are heard as institutions make strategic decisions.

Institutional Benefits

Enhancing student retention. Astin (1985) concludes that high intensity involvement in the campus community leads to increased persistence among students. Involvement builds stronger relationships with faculty and staff--relationships that help students bond to a particular campus environment. In addition, active student involvement greatly enhances decision-making and policy-development processes within the institution. Noel (1985) also states that involvement assists entering students in creating support systems that foster a sense of belonging and an ability to contribute to the college community. These outcomes tend to counteract the loneliness that is a major reason for attrition among new students.

Developing a stronger sense of community. Ernest Boyer (1990) has raised significant concerns over the lack of community on college and university campuses. Student apathy, alcohol abuse, racial and ethnic divisions, and acts of incivility weaken the integrity of many institutions. In response, Boyer has challenged institutions to work to create stronger campus communities. In one capacity, campuses must work to create a purposeful community where "the academic and nonacademic cannot be divided. If students do not become intellectually engaged--if they do not take seriously the educational mission of the institution--then all talk about community will be simply a diversion." Service in leadership positions will greatly enhance student identification with the campus community, and with the stated mission of the institution both in and out of the classroom. Active student leadership will help in creating stronger communities on our campuses.

Providing potential for curricular/co-curricular partnerships. Service in structured leadership opportunities outside of the classroom provides tremendous potential for developing linkages with various components of the academic mission of the university (Zeller, Hinni & Eison, 1989). Gardner (1990) states that the best off-campus or real-life experiences are linked to some form of instruction or counseling, so that the person dropped into a strange milieu receives help in the adjustment process. Currently, many academic disciplines are building leadership studies into their curriculum. In addition, many colleges and universities explicitly state that leadership and leadership skills are an anticipated outcome of the undergraduate experience. Residence life professionals should take advantage of the potential these positions offer for creating meaningful collaboration with academic colleagues.

Allowing upper-level students to serve as mentors for new students. Upper-level students often have credibility with new students that faculty and professional staff cannot obtain (Perkins & Kemmerling, 1983). In addition, upper-level students can encourage and support organizational involvement among new students, and lead new students into higher subsequent levels of involvement. The potential benefits for both parties are tremendous, and can truly make the experience for all students more meaningful when structured into a residential leadership program.

Components of a First-Year Residential Leadership Program

Developing a residential first-year leadership program should be a formally structured component of the entire residence life programming scheme. Residence life organizations offer a wide variety of leadership opportunities for all students, and new students in particular must be aware of and encouraged to participate in these opportunities. Students serving in floor, house, and system-wide student government positions, paraprofessional positions, and other leadership roles should be provided with support and guidance to maximize the learning and skill development that occurs in these positions. All residence life staff who advise, supervise, and train these student leaders should have as a primary responsibility the assurance that these contacts are as successful as possible in terms of developing quality leadership skills.

When developing a first-year residential leadership program, the following components and issues should be addressed:

Marketing leadership during the recruitment and orientation of new students. Generating interest in leadership opportunities among first-year students must start prior to the beginning of the year. Highlighting leadership opportunities during high school recruitment programs and during summer orientation programs can create enthusiasm and interest prior to students' arrival on campus. It is extremely important that leadership and involvement opportunities be "packaged" in a fashion that evokes interest. Developing publicity materials that list all leadership opportunities available, as well as reasons for becoming involved, will help potential students begin to plan for the types of opportunities they would like to investigate. In addition, names of interested students can be obtained during orientation, and can be used to solicit new leaders once the school year starts.

Developing effective strategies for communicating leadership opportunities to new students. New students need to be aware of all leadership and involvement opportunities available to them at the onset of their university careers. Along with the recruitment and orientation publicity materials listed above, it is extremely important that students have a comprehensive listing of all leadership opportunities when making decisions about involvement. Again, floor, hall, and system-wide government positions, paraprofessional positions, and intensive student employment positions should be listed.

Developing common skill development and learning outcomes for all residential leadership positions. Developing and communicating stated skill development outcomes for all leadership positions within the residence hall system should be a priority when developing a first-year leadership program. Competencies in such areas as communication, problem solving, decision making, group motivation, etc., are skills typically developed at various levels of intensity in all positions. Gardner (1990) states that well-conceived out-of-classroom experiences should provide one or more of the following:

- Opportunities for students to experience the shared responsibilities of group action and to learn the skills required to make a group function effectively.
- Opportunities for students to test their judgment under pressure, in the face of opposition, and in the fluid, swiftly changing circumstances characteristic of action.
- Opportunities for students to test and sharpen their intuitive gifts and to judge their impact on others.
- Exposure to new constituencies.
- Exposure to the complex world, where decisions must be made on inadequate information and the soundest argument does not always win; where problems rarely get solved completely, or, once solved, surface anew in another form.

Quite often, students are not fully aware of their own skill development until after they have served in these positions, or even after they have completed their college careers and have entered the work force. Proactively communicating and monitoring common outcomes for all positions will not only maximize the benefits of serving in these positions, but will also help advisors and supervisors structure their contacts with new student leaders.

Early identification and recruitment program. It is very important to identify potential new student leaders early in the academic year and encourage, if not recruit them, into active involvement. Many student leaders have begun their leadership careers "accidentally" by haphazard discovery of leadership opportunities. Higher levels of student interest can be generated when potential leaders are identified and invited to participate in leadership positions. Staff and upper-level student leaders can be utilized to help identify potential leaders among the new students. It is very important to note that residence hall student leadership positions are often ideally suited for students who may not have been highly involved in high school and might not otherwise be interested in becoming involved in the university. Identifying and encouraging these students to become involved and providing incentives to do so is important for a first-year residential leadership program. Additionally, specialized training should be provided for all new students who are interested in serving in a leadership position.

Formalizing the initial contacts the department has with new leaders. Specific residential leadership positions are more suitable for new students and should be identified as such. Entry level positions on the floors and in the residence halls should be targeted to them. With the focus on new students, greater attention, support, and guidance can be given to the unique needs of new student leaders in these positions. From these positions, students can be mentored by upper-level students as well, with the intent to prepare new students to serve in more intensive positions later.

Assisting students as they decide the best types and extent of their involvement. Of all the decisions faced on the co-curricular side of student life, the biggest and most far reaching choices deal with involvement and leadership in student organizations (Anderson, 1980). A first-year residential leadership program should provide support for new students to assist them in making proper decisions regarding involvement. Lawson, Griffin and Donant (1976) outline five factors which should enter into decisions concerning involvement in organizations. These are:

- ✦ What are your personal needs and values?
- ✦ Are the values of the group(s) you are considering compatible with yours?
- ✦ Do the activities of the group show promise of meeting your needs?
- ✦ Will the group allow you enough freedom?
- ✦ Are the goals of the group ones you would like to help achieve?

Anderson (1980) adds that residence life staff can assist in making sure the student feels confident he or she can meet the expectations of the role, that it will be challenging, and that it will fulfill desires for personal growth and satisfaction. These are the types of issues and questions that residence life staff can provide new students to assist them in making decisions regarding short- and long-range involvement.

Providing means for students to have high levels of exposure to a variety of positions. First-year leadership positions in the residential setting provide excellent opportunities for new students to obtain initial contacts with a wide variety of positions, organizations, and upperclass leaders. These contacts help new students obtain information about future involvement opportunities, thus helping them plan a pattern of involvement for their college careers. The more structured these contacts are, the more pertinent the information will be for new students.

Advising, supervising, and training - enhancing the contacts between residential staff and new student leaders. The primary contacts residence life staff members have with new student leaders are through the advising of student groups and individual leaders, the supervision of residence hall staff and student employees, and the leadership training programs in which new students participate. By identifying these primary staff/student leader contacts and working with residence hall staff members who provide these contacts, the relationships between the residence life department and new student leaders will be more deliberate in terms of skill development.

Certain skills are expected to be developed through the advising process. For example, an advisor who works with a student group to plan an all-hall dance can ensure that the planning process is also helping the student develop skills in such areas as problem solving, decision making, planning, group communications, etc. In reality, this type of structure is simply formalizing the learning that may already be occurring without being fully realized by the advisor or the advisee. Identifying and structuring these advising, supervising, and training contacts will only maximize the learning and skill development that takes place between staff and first-year student leaders.

Assisting students in making a plan of involvement for their entire college career. The first college year is a time when new student leaders should be developing a plan for leadership that best fits their interests, academic majors, and future career aspirations. Once new students obtain enough information and variety of contacts regarding leadership possibilities, they should be encouraged to develop this plan. Residential student leadership career paths have often been developed in haphazard fashions, without full consideration for what might be in the best long-range interests of the student. Contacts with new student leaders should attempt to assist students in developing plans which maximize the long-range benefits of their involvement.

Recognizing new student leadership participation. Acknowledging and recognizing first-year involvement in leadership opportunities should be an ongoing component of a residential leadership program. Throughout the first college year, advisors and the residence life central staff members should recognize their new student leaders. Letters of thanks and recognition mean a great deal to a new leader. Such recognition reaffirms their value in the system and acknowledges that their contribution is important. Recording activities completed--either service in specified positions, participation in specialized training programs, or special accomplishments--and presenting leaders with certificates acknowledging these accomplishments also leads to an affirmation of achievement. Long-range goals for a residential leadership program should include some type of formal recording or transcribing of leadership and involvement within the residence hall system. Recording leadership involvement will provide a means for verifying involvement and service, and will also lend an air of credibility to these positions as students leave the program and pursue other endeavors.

Assessment strategies. A significant component of a residential leadership program should be to develop assessment strategies which will provide accurate information regarding the achievement of stated outcomes of the program. First of all, levels of involvement need to be assessed. Who is getting involved, how many are getting involved, and in what types of positions involvement is occurring, are several components of the leadership program that need to be assessed. In addition, growth levels, particularly in areas of stated learning and skill development outcomes also need to be determined. One type of measurement in this area is self-reported growth. Simply asking student leaders at the end of their experiences how influential their positions were in helping them develop stated skills (i.e., communications, problem solving, decision making, etc.) will provide valuable information for a program. Other types of skill development measures can also be addressed, but may be costly and more complicated to administer. Transcribing or recording involvement, both individually and collectively, also records valuable information. The bottom line for all assessment and outcomes initiatives is to ensure that information is gathered to improve the program.

Conclusion

This chapter provides an overall view of the benefits and recommended components of a structured residential leadership program for new students. Such programs can play a significant role in helping instill interest and commitment to lifelong leadership and citizenship among students. The first college year is the time to begin this process, and the residence halls are often the most suitable place for this process to take place.

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Chapter 9

Residence Life Programs and the First-Year Experience: Personal Safety and Security

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This chapter addresses the following goals as outlined in the Introduction :

1 Serve as an integral component of the recruitment and orientation of new students

2 Help first-year students make a smooth transition to the university community

11 Educate and heighten sensitivity toward personal safety and security issues among new students

Campus safety and security issues have drawn increased scrutiny from students and the general public in recent years. First-year students must be informed of the risks inherent in a college and university environment and the steps they should take to minimize these risks. Residence hall staff and programs should play a critical role in educating and informing new students about personal safety and security.

Residence halls play a key role in sensitizing new students to campus safety issues. In the process of assisting students in their transition to the campus community, a priority must be placed on educating them about the realities of the campus environment. Students expect a safe and secure living environment, yet it is imperative that they understand their responsibilities for protecting themselves and their property.

Educating new students about personal safety and security on today's campuses is critical to the success of students, residence hall systems, and universities. The challenge has become one of informing both students and their parents about the realities of campus life while still addressing their needs as consumers. It is essential that we inform and sensitize without producing inordinately negative images of the collegiate experience.

Increasingly, campus administrators often face contradictory needs to provide for students' safety and well-being while still allowing them to develop autonomy. An issue that must be addressed by each campus is to find the appropriate balance between student freedom and institutional control within a context of developing a strong sense of community. On many campuses, the development of community begins in the residence halls.

The residence hall, in which many students begin their college careers, is also the primary location for providing new students with essential programs and information on personal safety and security. More contact occurs between students and staff in the residence halls than anywhere else in the campus community. From the first day of orientation through the last day of the academic year, residence hall strategies should be developed to inform and educate new students on the issues of personal safety. Developing these strategies will be the focus of this chapter.

Safety Education During New Student Orientation

New student orientation is a time for university and residence hall programs to showcase themselves for prospective students and their parents. Orientation programs are designed to provide pertinent information in an attractive format. In the past, the issues of personal safety and security have often been given cursory attention during orientation sessions, primarily due to the institutional need for conveying positive information and images during this important period.

However, times have changed. The recent attention being given to campus safety has placed the issue in the forefront of parental and student concerns as they make decisions regarding institutional choice. In addition, with the Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act being signed into law in 1990, all colleges and universities receiving federal assistance must provide crime statistics in a consistent fashion. In addition, full disclosure must be provided regarding campus policies and procedures related to maintenance of safety and security on campus. New student orientation is the best time to work with students and their parents on this critical issue.

Again, the means of communicating these issues and the information being provided should be done in a manner which does not create undue alarm. It should, however, be informative enough to give the student and his or her family the information they need and should sensitize them to the importance of taking personal responsibility for safety.

Typically, residence hall staff are given an opportunity to make presentations to students and their parents about on-campus living during new student orientation. It is imperative that the issue of personal safety and security be addressed during this presentation. Discussions should occur about theft of personal property, personal safety, and the role of the student and university staff in assuming responsibility for community management.

Conveying a message of concern, openness, and shared responsibility is important during these sessions. Written materials provided during orientation should also include information on personal safety.

Opening Day and New Student Check-In

The first day new students arrive on campus is a prime time for residence life staff to send strong messages about personal safety and security. It is a time when new students may feel vulnerable and need assistance. It is also the last time staff can have contact with parents before the school year begins.

During the campus arrival and hall check-in process, staff and returning students can work with new students to welcome them to the campus and their hall while indicating sensitivity to the protection of personal property. Many universities use student volunteer helpers to greet new students and assist them in carrying personal belongings to their rooms. Many campuses have experienced problems with theft of unattended property as students leave items in the parking lots while processing their check-in. It is important that "front-line" staff greet new students while conveying to them the importance of watching their belongings.

The check-in process is a time when staff can meet new students, welcome them to the floor, and also convey messages about personal safety. As new students receive their room and hall keys, staff can instruct them on responsible usage of these keys. It is essential to talk about making sure that public area and outside doors are kept locked, not propping them open at any time, and not leaving room doors unlocked when unattended.

Information packets given to new students should also contain materials on safety and security. Some residence hall and floor bulletin board space can also be used to send appropriate messages about safety.

Using strategies such as these during new student check-in can set an immediate climate which promotes a safe and secure environment in the residence halls. These initial messages directly and indirectly convey to new students expectations that can continue throughout the year.

The Beginning of the Year

The first few weeks of school provide critical opportunities for working with new students in the residence halls. It is imperative that the issues of personal safety and protection of personal property be presented in the initial contacts residence hall staff have with new students.

The first floor meeting that residence life staff hold with new students should include a discussion on personal safety. Expectations should be conveyed for acceptable community behaviors. Again, discussions should include the following: doors propped open in the hall and on the floor, unlocked room doors, misuse of keys, and not allowing other community members to put themselves at risk.

Date rape should be a subject for discussion, not only on women's floors, but also in coed settings. The first few weeks offer ample opportunities for parties and social occasions in which new students can find themselves in situations that place them at risk. Students should also be cautioned about walking alone at night, and information about escort services and floor support programs should be presented. Residence hall community members can work together to communicate and support each other so that risks can be minimized.

Campus-wide programs on personal safety can also be developed to send quick and meaningful messages to new students. Speakers, films, and other floor programs can be developed to provide an arena for giving messages to large numbers of new students. Some campuses have utilized the campus cable system to broadcast into the residence halls safety video programs, followed by staff-led discussion groups.

Programs to register and identify personal property should also be offered. These programs not only assist police officials when thefts do occur, but they also continue to send a message of concern and sensitivity about personal safety.

Program Development During the First Year

The transition from high school to college can be a very real trauma for many first-year students. While many schools today do a thorough job of presenting information about college as they recruit, the actual arrival of students on campus and the transition they experience in the first few weeks of college are still issues of concern. Students may be self-conscious, confused, and even homesick. In general, they are unsure about their developing problem-solving and social skills. They may have more freedom at college than they are accustomed to. Some students inevitably feel a sense of immortality; they believe that tragedy or mishap cannot happen to them. Thus, educators must advise emerging young adults who are, on the one hand, exploring, experimenting, and discovering new-found freedom, to "be careful," "lock your door," "watch where you walk at night," and "don't take risks."

The challenge for residence hall administrators becomes involving first-year students in the campus and residence hall community. However, "today's typical first-year students do not enter college with high levels of self-motivation. They have become accustomed to the passive intake of information in their home life and at school" (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). Therefore, the residence hall staff needs a wide variety of techniques to impress upon these students the need to be committed to their own safety and security.

Addressing issues of student safety and personal property security should be a continued priority throughout the residential first-year experience. Staff programming, residence hall policies and procedures, and the monitoring of facility safeguards should all be incorporated into the services residence hall staff provide for new students. Close working relationships with campus police agencies should be developed to ensure maximum effectiveness of these efforts.

As new students get settled into their routines and begin to become comfortable with and involved in their residence hall communities, a potentially hazardous condition can result. Residence hall staff work very hard to create communities in which there is a great deal of interaction, friendship, and trust. Because of the strong sense of trust that residence hall communities establish, students can become complacent toward personal safety. Community members who know each other well often feel comfortable keeping their door unlocked when they go to visit friends down the hall, to watch TV in the floor lounge, or to sleep at night. These behaviors need to be monitored and checked throughout the year.

An effective program for addressing the problem of unlocked doors has been to have residence hall staff and students periodically check room doors on a hall. If unattended rooms are unlocked, a message should be left notifying the occupant that the check had been made and that a theft could easily have occurred.

Another effective program strategy for addressing safety issues during the year is to take advantage of "teachable moments" after a crime has occurred. Programming around an incident reinforces with community members the importance of safety responsibility. When thefts, vandalism, and even assaults occur, staff should reinforce with students the hazards of the environment and continue to communicate strategies that minimize risk. Bringing outside resources into the building (e.g., police and fire department staff, counseling staff, and even victims) can help educate students about personal safety.

Developing campus escort programs and encouraging students to use them should also be an ongoing initiative of residence hall staff. Many men's floors and halls have successfully sponsored escort programs that have been used extensively.

Some residence hall floors and halls have developed student safety officer positions in their floor and hall government structures. Developing a peer network of building monitors helps strengthen the sense of community and shared responsibility while increasing the impact that safety education programs can have. Students in police science, majors in particular, benefit from participation in such programs. Peers working with peers can often generate greater credibility and cooperation with new students than can university staff members.

Another effective strategy for communicating safety concerns is through classroom instruction in the special first-year courses being offered on many campuses.

Faculty Enhancements

The issue of providing more secure environments for new students is an issue with which many residence hall administrators are currently struggling. Parental expectations, along with increased public scrutiny, have placed renewed pressures on the institution to provide safer — and more restrictive — environments for new students.

For example, in some circles, co-ed living environments are being targeted as inherently unsafe because outside intruders cannot easily be identified. Residence hall professionals, however, often indicate that their coed facilities have the lowest rates of theft and personal assaults on campus. In addition, hours of open building access, lock-up procedures, outside door card access systems, and the extent of staff rounds are all receiving attention.

Facility and procedural changes in these areas can be perceived as restrictive and can become an issue of dissatisfaction among residents. Boyer (1990) quotes a student he encountered in his studies who stated, "We don't want the university to interfere in our lives; but we want someone in the university to be concerned with our lives." The balance that must be met, therefore, is somehow to address the issues in a professional and responsible manner with parents and the public while maintaining positive relationships with students. As changes are considered, open dialogue and communication between residents and staff must be generated in order to develop cooperation and understanding.

The issues surrounding the safety and security of campus residents will most likely continue to be of critical concern in the future. Shared ownership of these issues among university staff, residence hall administrators, students, and parents will be necessary to achieve our goals.

Addendum*

Residence hall staff must be informed of the legal risks involved in the operational management of campus housing facilities. The following cases are representative samples of recent court cases involving residence hall students.

Bullock v. Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina. (North Carolina Industrial Commission, 1989)

Incident: A student was murdered in a campus residence hall at North Carolina Central University during the Labor Day weekend.

Result: The court found that the occurrence was reasonably foreseeable because the campus was in a high-crime area. There had been many crimes in the residence halls, and the procedure to check IDs at the hall entrances was discontinued because of student complaints. The hall doors were often propped open and three of the four security guards were given Labor Day off.

Crow v. State, 271 Cal. Rptr. 349. (California Court of Appeal, Third District, 1990)

Incident: Crow, a resident student at California State University-Sacramento, was severely beaten at a residence hall beer party by Saipole, the nose guard on the football team. Saipole had previously assaulted an RA while intoxicated. The RA refused to press charges. Crow brought suit on the basis of breach of contract in that the residence halls were negligently operated.

Result: The court held that "The insufficiency of plaintiff's claim lies in its failure to set forth the factual basis for recovery alleged in the complaint." Nowhere in the written claim did Crow state that he was a resident of one of the halls.

Delaney v. University of Houston, 792 S. W. 2d 733. (Texas Court of Appeals, 1990)

Incident: A scholarship volleyball player stayed in her residence hall room during Easter vacation. Earlier, she reported a problem with a door lock in that the key broke off in the lock. The lock was not repaired. Also, an outside door was propped open. The plaintiff was raped at gunpoint during the vacation period.

Result: The court held that Texas tort law does not permit claims arising out of the operation of a public college residence hall. (A dissenting opinion suggested the private Texas colleges might be liable on these factors.)

Duarte v. State, 148 Cal. Rptr. 804. (California Court of Appeals, 4th Dist., Div. 1, 1978)

Incident: Tanya Duarte, a student at San Diego State University, was raped and murdered in the residence hall room by a non-student who confessed to the crime.

Result: The court held that the university owed a duty to students to provide an essentially safe place of residence and that the university officials negligently misrepresented the safety of their residence halls. (The victim's mother had asked the housing administrator if her daughter would be safe. The administrator guaranteed her safety.) Also, the university had no immunity from liability for the negligence of its employees.

Eiseman v. State of New York, 489 N.Y.S. 2nd 947. (Supreme Court. App. Div. 4th Dept., 1985)

Incident: A conditionally-released prisoner attending the State University at Buffalo raped and murdered a female student in an on-campus apartment. He also murdered a male student and stabbed a non-student during the same episode.

Results: The court held that the university had a duty to check into his background (suitability for admission). The university had a screening program for convicted felons already in place. Also, the prison officials had a duty to inform the university of the prisoner's mental condition. This situation was a foreseeable risk.

Miller v. State of New York, 478 NYS 2d 829. (N.Y., 1984)

Incident: A female student was attacked by a man with a knife in the laundry room of her residence hall. He blindfolded her and took her out of the laundry room through three unlocked doors up to her room where she was raped twice at knife point.

Result: The university was held liable because strangers were not uncommon in the hallways. It was reasonably foreseeable that a stranger could gain entrance into the building since the outer doors were unlocked. The university failed to keep the outer doors locked. "As a landlord, the state must act as a reasonable person in maintaining property in a reasonable, safe condition in view of all the circumstances."

Mullins v. Pine Manor College, 449 N.E. 2nd 231. (Supreme Court of Massachusetts, 1983)

Incident: A first-year female student was sexually assaulted on the college grounds by a non-student. All first-year students are required to live on campus. A high fence surrounded the entire campus. The security measures appeared to be very elaborate.

Result: The court held that the college was liable. The opinion stated that, "Parents, students, and the general community still have a reasonable expectation, fostered in part by colleges themselves, that reasonable care will be exercised to protect students from foreseeable harm." (This case is of importance because it recognized the student's right to rely on the college's duty or voluntary undertaking to provide protection.)

Neiswand v. Cornell University, 692 F. Supp. 1464. (N.D.N.Y., 1988)

Incident: Two female residents were shot to death in their residence hall room by a non-student who had gained entrance into the hall.

Result: The court held that the college had a duty to "provide minimal precautions to protect students from the reasonably foreseeable acts of third persons." A statement in the housing brochure noting that the doors would be locked at a certain time constituted part of the contract between the student and the university. However, the case was remanded to determine if the shooting was "reasonably foreseeable" and if so, did the university breach its contract.

*Materials from ACUHO-I Regional Workshop Series on Residence Hall Safety. Compiled by James Grimm, University of Florida.

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Chapter 10

Decision Making and Career Planning as College Success Factors in the Residential First Year

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This chapter addresses the following goals as outlined in the Introduction :

2 Help first-year students make a smooth transition to the university community

7 Provide social and educational programs which help students fulfill academic and developmental competencies

12 Work to create an understanding of the ethos that the university is an interactive community of scholars

First-year students face a wide variety of challenges and problems which demand sound decision-making skills. Residence hall staff and programs can assist new students in developing competencies for making short- and long-term decisions. Choosing a career is one of the key issues new students face. Strategies should be in place to support new students in this difficult process.

Today's students are faced with overwhelming and often contrary influences on their decisions as they encounter the personal autonomy of the collegiate experience. Many first-year students are exhibiting higher anxiety and stress levels than ever before over the decisions they will have to make during their undergraduate careers. Students enter college wondering, "Can I make it here?" "Am I choosing the right major?" "Will I be able to make friends?" "Will I be able to have the lifestyle I want after I graduate?" It is a difficult, often frightening time that can be made more bearable in a structured and nurturing residential environment. This environment should provide opportunities to assist students in making decisions which positively influence the development of critical-thinking skills and, ultimately, the level of their success in college.

The importance of an emphasis on critical-thinking and decision-making skills in residential first-year programming is confirmed by Wullner (1988). She found that many beginning college students lack basic planning and decision-making skills. This deficiency impacts negatively on their ability to continue successfully on an academic track. For example, when faced with survival-based financial problems (especially common to students who are academically able but economically disadvantaged), students may not be able to envision their options. They may, therefore, make decisions to leave college rather than decisions which might be more likely to lead to college completion.

A logical approach to helping students develop decision-making and critical-thinking skills is to provide skill-development programming in the residential setting. Some possible programs of self-exploration may include: choosing academic majors, enhancing interpersonal relationships, deciding lifestyle issues, developing meaningful interaction with others who are unlike themselves, and choosing leadership opportunities. Such programs also encourage students to think critically about who they are, who they want to be, and how they will commit themselves in terms of a vocational choice. Providing program offerings on critical thinking, decision making, and life and career planning during the residential first year is an essential strategy to address the decision-making needs of beginning college students.

Review of the Literature

The literature substantiates the benefit of nurturing college or university environments for young adults. Inherent in an environment that fosters development are tasks that involve students in making choices and exercising independent judgment (Chickering, 1969). Providing students opportunities to make sound decisions supports the achievement of their goals --- including their success in college. Pascarella (1989) found that students who attended college for one year scored higher in critical thinking than a matched group of students who did not attend. Astin (1973, 1977, & 1984) continues to find that students who live in on-campus housing have a ten to fifteen percent better chance of doing well in college. Astin defines "doing well in college" by the following variables: getting better grades, finishing in four years, going on to graduate school, and, in general, being better satisfied with the college experience.

Combining these two research findings, one might propose that students who complete the first year of college while living on campus are more likely than others to develop better critical-thinking skills and be more successful in achieving their college goals. Recent research by Mines, King, Hood, and Wood (1990) suggests that this is true. They found that the acquisition of higher order cognitive skills is related to environmental opportunities to learn and practice one's reasoning skills. Development occurs in a structured environment, such as a residence hall, where skills are modeled and taught and where new students are given opportunities to practice and receive feedback about their success in applying new skills.

Research also emphasizes the importance of helping students become aware of the many variations of life role options and assisting them in the development of skills for successful decision making (Hansen, 1978; Blustein, 1989).

Teaching critical-thinking skills offers an established means by which students make conscious, satisfying, and purposeful decisions. Collingridge (1982) defines a basic three-step decision-making model: (a) listing all consequences of the available options, (b) placing those consequences in order of preference, and (c) choosing the options with the most preferred consequences. However, according to Zunker (1990), decision making is a complex process based on one's values, interests, options, and unique qualities as applied to making a decision.

To help new students make sound decisions, it would thus seem necessary to concentrate first on self-exploration and then on external career options. Developmental theorists and career development research support this supposition. Blustein (1989) finds that self-exploration is particularly important at the earlier phases of career decision making, when the major developmental tasks include the crystallization of the self-concept. Allan and Thomson (1975) find that before intelligent decisions regarding the choice of occupation can be made, the individual must conduct a thorough self-analysis involving values, preferences, expectations, and lifestyle. Educational programming opportunities in the residence halls provide the perfect vehicle for this self-exploration.

Zunker (1990) provides models for the delivery of career- and life-planning services by many units within the institution. While such programs have been very useful in other settings, (e.g., in career-planning centers, classrooms, etc.), a highly effective approach appears to be providing these opportunities for students where they live. Thus, campus residence halls and off-campus housing units are settings of choice.

Student Peer Counselors

Using peer counselors such as resident advisors (RAs) as educational program facilitators is a common expectation in many residential life programs. Brown (1977) finds that students listen to students more readily than to adults; therefore, the acceptability of information is increased when students are the facilitators of such programs in residence halls.

Allan and Thomson (1975) also find that the advantages of utilizing paraprofessionals in the residence halls to conduct career exploration workshops are many and varied. They state that, from the student viewpoint, a supportive, friendly, and non-threatening atmosphere away from the administrative area is not only conducive to self-evaluation and serious reflection, but also provides for stimulating small-group interaction. Zunker (1990) reports research findings indicating that peer counselors can be as effective as professionals in academic adjustment guidance.

Using residential peer counselors to facilitate an opportunity for decision making, critical-thinking skill development, and life planning during the first year is suggested. One approach to such a program has been developed at San Diego State University to enable first-year students to make choices relevant to their values and goals, including career exploration. This program involves setting up voluntary two-hour workshop sessions in residence halls within the first few weeks of classes.

"Making Choices" -- setting goals with specific steps to accomplish those goals -- is the focus of a voluntary academic success and career-planning program. Offered to beginning students in the residence halls, the program consists of three two-hour sessions scheduled over the first half of the fall semester and is facilitated by RAs. The RAs are trained through a brief leader's orientation session conducted by residence life professional staff.

The first workshop session is introductory, with content including: getting to know one another, defining the purposes of the program, the concepts to be presented and applied, and the showing of a videotape entitled "The Choice is Yours – Choosing College Success." An interactive session follows during which the group members discuss their previous decisions which have contributed to their chances for college success.

The second session provides small group discussion on topics related to decisions students can make which will lead to their success. The topics include: setting academic goals, defining an academic self-concept, using textbooks, taking notes in lectures, participating in campus activities, clarifying values, making friends, defining family expectations, choosing faculty, getting to know the faculty, managing money, dealing with health and safety issues, and getting help when needed. Students are encouraged to explore these topics with the help of skill-building workshops in the residence halls, residence hall staff, counselors (personal, academic, financial), health services staff, parents, faculty and friends. Summarizing statements are provided at the closing of the session from lists made by the facilitators.

The third session consists of a career-planning workshop jointly presented by a staff member of the career planning and placement center and a resident advisor. The content of this hour-and-a-half segment includes a presentation on the issues about which a student must make decisions and familiarity with tools used in making those decisions. Each participant is encouraged to begin planning to formulate and/or clarify individual goals, commit time for research and planning, collect information, estimate consequences, make and/or confirm decisions, and reevaluate periodically.

The last half hour of the program provides a process for participants to summarize the decisions they have made and are in the process of making and to confirm an action plan.

To date, the research on results has been limited only to student evaluation of the workshops. Simply stated, these responses have averaged 4.4 on a 5-point Likert scale indicating that the usefulness of the program is highly accepted by the participating students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Emphasizing self-exploration, decision making and career planning in the residential first year appears to be useful to students as they begin their college careers. A significant body of knowledge exists to define and validate the use of critical thinking, decision making, life planning and to suggest the use of peer advisors in facilitating programs for beginning college students.

Institutions of higher education have an obligation to explore outcomes in terms of retention, graduation, satisfaction rates, employment opportunities, and some of the more philosophical or esoteric objectives of the college/university experience as related to the choices students make. The effectiveness of such decision-making, skill-building and life-planning programs in first-year residential settings can be proven only if structured and researched. Many programs of this type are likely to be useful to students if handled informally with a combination of peer and professional leadership. Researching results is, however, as much a part of the program as is the content and can only enhance our understanding of the role of decision making as a factor in achieving student success in college.

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Chapter 11

Promoting Diversity Among New Students in Predominantly White Residence Halls

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This chapter addresses the following goals as outlined in the Introduction:

2 Help first-year students make a smooth transition to the university community

7 Provide social and educational programs which help students fulfill academic and developmental competencies

8 Help first-year students develop interpersonal skills and competencies by promoting positive interactions between roommates and other residential community members

9 Allow students to develop a tolerance and appreciation of individual, cultural, and racial differences

Residence hall communities offer numerous ways to help first-year students learn about others who are different from themselves. Both formal and informal opportunities exist in the residence halls to facilitate an appreciation for cultural diversity among first-year students. Residence hall staff should strive to maximize the potential these opportunities offer while providing a supportive environment for minority students.

Residence hall experiences can have a profound impact on first-year students as they learn about others who are different from themselves. Due to the proximity of living arrangements, contact with diverse customs, color, age, and abilities is unavoidable. Such contact, along with the 2:00 a.m. talks about home lives and values, increases understanding of cultural differences. As first-year students discover similarities of basic human needs, they can become more appreciative of diverse student populations.

First-year students may experience feelings of fear and isolation when they separate from their families and move into the residence halls. In addition to normal anxiety, people of color may feel even more overwhelmed at the prospect of living in residence halls where the majority of students are white. Conversely, distrust and internalized biases may peak in the new circumstances of a racially integrated living environment.

One objective of residence hall programs is to aid minority first-year students in establishing pride for their own heritage and identity. Another objective is to raise the consciousness of residents of the dominant culture about pluralism. Residence hall staff can build communities in which each member has a sense of comfort, acceptance, and belonging. With newly acquired knowledge and cultural sensitivity from residence hall experiences and programs, residents can modify their attitudes toward people who are different from themselves, thus enhancing respect for individual rights (Jakobsen & Krager, 1986). A primary outcome of residential living is to have first-year students progress from tolerance to a true appreciation of what can be gained from incorporating the strengths of the diverse subgroups into their lives.

This chapter examines interpersonal dynamics in residence halls that may be caused by the dissonance created by diversity and some common problems faced by minority residents. Pragmatic programs and staff training modules are suggested with recommendations for dealing with issues of diversity.

Interpersonal Dynamics

In predominantly white residence halls, lack of trust and communication are significant sources of racism (Stewart, 1977). Dalton (1989) found that today's white students have exhibited decreasing concern about race relations and societal problems. Moreover, a finding in a recent study by Carter (1990) is that increasing numbers of white male college students demonstrate denigrating attitudes toward everything associated with the African-American culture. When residence hall staff recognize these attitudes, they need to monitor the overt emotional and sometimes physical reactions of anger resulting from racial discord and intervene when necessary.

Increased attention to injustices experienced by a wide array of minorities may exacerbate the frustration of some majority students. Additionally, the number of international students and adult students is a potential source of conflict in the competitive academic environment. During the early 1990s the war in the Persian Gulf provoked unfortunate hostilities toward some Middle Eastern students. There are even differences between urban and rural first-year students regarding expected, appropriate behaviors in the residential community. Many educators fear that expanding diversity may lead to possible backlash.

Meanwhile, some subcultures may experience conflict while trying to hold on to their heritage, beliefs, and practices as they become assimilated in the dominant culture in order to succeed in college. A few salient illustrations follow.

Some African-American students may feel stripped of their history by textbooks written by and featuring white leaders and scientists (Taylor, 1986). Semmes (1985) emphasizes the need for recognition, respect, and legitimacy of non-white cultural traditions. He suggests that "rap" music resounding from residence hall windows may be a personal statement of rejection of the EuroAmerican artistry highlighted in classrooms and campus/residence hall activities.

Much research has also been done on gender differences in reaction to the mostly male sample upon which college student developmental theories are normed. For example, Gilligan (1982) challenges Kohlberg's (1969) fairness and justice premise, stating that women's moral reasoning is based on an ethic of care, relationships, and responsibility to others' needs. Straub and Rodgers (1986) posit that mature interpersonal relations are the preoccupation of women in the first and second years of college with autonomy crises as a later developmental task; this is the reverse of Chickering's (1969) findings. These theories suggest why so much staff time is taken up with female roommate conflicts and why programs about friendship and intimate relationships are popular and well-attended.

Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals constitute other subgroups. Evans and Levine (1990) report that 30% of successful suicides are committed by adolescents who are identified as having experienced attraction to people of the same sex. At minimum, "out-of-the-closet" gay males and lesbians are subjected to verbal harassment and physical violence. Fear that roommates will find out if homosexual residents were to be open about their sexuality, as well as slurs and jokes that entrench self-critique, reinforce the need for staff to create opportunities to enhance mutual understanding between students with different sexual preferences (D'Augelli & Rose, 1990).

Language used to address each of the subcultures can imply either positive or derogatory aspects of identity. Wakelee-Lynch (1990) reinforces findings that persons behave in congruence with their self-perceptions. Therefore, terms like "disabled" or "handicapped" accentuate what individuals lack and reinforce the attitude of being a victim.

Being different can be intimidating and lonely. Cultural differences may also cause divisiveness within residence hall communities. For example, in the Chinese culture, inhibition of feelings and self-control are personality characteristics valued highly (Sue & Sue, 1972). Therefore, Chinese and Native American students often view verbal assertiveness as rude and unsocialized (Tinloy, 1978).

Traditional-aged first-year students probably never contemplate the possibility of living with an older student. However, 42% of today's college population is composed of adult students, and many are becoming roommates of traditional-aged students. Inconsistent with the "invincible" late adolescent who is testing independence and limits, the adult student has the desire to obtain a degree, with reasons varying from wanting to change careers or simply wanting to continue learning (Krager, Wrenn, & Hirt, 1990).

If residence hall staff are expected to be life-skills educators, they should become familiar with the various developmental theories tested on subcultures. Cross (1971) provides a model which describes stages of black racial identity. Similar to the Cross model, Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1983) provide a theory of developmental stages for Asian-Americans. Again, a spin-off of Cross's studies is Helms's (1985) stage model of progressive racial consciousness on the part of white people. Finally, Cass (1979) proposes a six-stage approach to gay, lesbian, and bisexual identity development; and Poston (1990) postulates a biracial identity development model.

Problems in Common

Acculturation

As subgroups attempt to preserve their culture while attending institutions designed and governed by majority students, they struggle internally with two identities. Bradley and

Stewart (1982) claim that their research on African-Americans, which is applicable to other minority students, indicates there are extensive pressures by the dominant white culture that relegate minority persons to a well-defined, inferior position. Minority individuals must maintain their identity and pride in spite of what white society says about them. This is an enormous task because internalized oppression begins in childhood. In addition, Gunnings (1982) articulates that minorities, like some in the majority, have difficulty in adjusting to the unfamiliar, be it academic pressures and/or different social codes. Such stress may induce hostile behavior (Bulhan, 1977). For example "black English," spoken with hostility in conduct hearings, may be an attempt of saying the African-American culture is separate and not understood.

Alienation

Allen (1985) states that 45% of African-American respondents at six state-supported white universities feel they have little or no part in campus life. This staggering figure indicates the isolation, powerlessness, and disenfranchised self-concept of minorities in general. Inclusive residence hall environments, in which staff highlight cultural attributes and attend to the special needs of first-year students from diverse backgrounds, enhance a sense of recognition and the ability to have personal impact.

Academic Pressures

Oppelt (1989) reports that many tribal Native Americans are underprepared in reading, writing, and mathematics; and they, therefore, are unable to compete and succeed at the college level. The same disadvantage holds true for other minority students.

In addition, minority students are more likely to be first-generation college students. Loo and Rolison (1986) provide demographic information to show that 60% of black and Chicano students were moving into a white living environment, again with white achievement standards, for the first time. Thus, expectations of college and residential settings are non-existent for most minority students. Residence hall activities, particularly during the critical first five weeks, assist in orienting and retaining students into their new "home."

Haynes (1978) shows that the self-fulfilling prophecy and expectations of teachers regarding academic achievement of marginal black college students does have a significant influence. Likewise, sexual orientation struggles take away attention from academics (Evans & Levine, 1990). Conversely, international students place academic achievement as their highest priority because of the strong pressures from their families and home countries (Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986). However, language barriers can make classwork exponentially cumbersome for some international students. To assist students in meeting these challenges, many institutions provide tutorial assistance and language labs in the residence halls.

Financial Pressures

Socialization and involvement in campus and residence hall co-curricular activities are highly correlated with persistence (Astin, 1977). However, struggling to keep grade point averages at a satisfactory level while working their way through school may keep some minority students from maintaining peer group interaction and leadership positions.

Intra-group Conflict

Evans (1986) contends that black students' lack of active participation in black activities is seen as a renunciation of their heritage. Likewise, dating a white person, or having too many white friends justifies being outcast by the cultural group. The behavioral question facing minority residents becomes, "Are my actions good for me, or are they good for the group?"

Family and Spiritual Ties

Edgewater (1981) describes the Navajo Indians' struggle of assimilating into the white culture, while traveling home frequently to tribal, family, and spiritual renewal. Furthermore, participation in higher education is a split with essential family/home community support and encouragement to which African-American students are accustomed (Hughes, 1987). Extended family and sharing of religious rituals are important to the heritage of each American racial and cultural minority group. Therefore, family weekends which incorporate cultural events, help maintain essential ties to the past while developing an identity for the future.

Programming

Residence halls throughout the nation have developed fairly similar strategies to promote an appreciation of diversity among students. For instance, many residence hall systems use panel discussions during which minority students explain their cultures and describe experiences of discrimination. The University of California-Berkeley provides workshops in residence halls on ethnic, gender, age, and social class stereotypes. Workshop leaders find that language, mispronounciation of names, and stereotypic thinking take away identity and block the effective communication necessary to break down feelings of alienation.

There are many examples of campus-wide innovations relating to diversity education that could be incorporated into residence hall programming. Theatrical plays designed to increase racial awareness are presented during first-year orientation at Middlebury College (Leslie, Lewis, Barrett, & Springen, 1989). Some institutions provide resource guides summarizing sociocultural, counseling, and academic conflicts with instructions on how to assist minority students (Pittman & Muschio, 1989). Southwest State College provides a "Freshman Organizational Chart" which shows services and resources available through campus offices.

At North Carolina State University an evaluative study regarding a residence hall composed of a mixture of traditional first-year and international students shows increased adjustment for the international students and a higher likelihood of participation in international activities on the part of the traditional first-year students (Marion & Stafford, 1980). Similarly, Central Connecticut State University has a cross-cultural residence hall with an unusual programmatic theme: inviting storytellers of international folklore into the hall (Simard & Higgins, 1988). The long-standing International House and Modern Language Floors at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln successfully attract and retain students across several cultures; however, more international than American students desire this living option.

Contact with faculty enhances the experience for students on the above-mentioned floors, as it does in any faculty fellow program. Parker, Scott, and Chambers (1985) contend that in order for African-American students to feel accepted, they must view the university as a place that respects minority students. A study by Lewis (1987) confirms that informal contact with faculty influences African-American students' decisions to remain at the institution.

Most schools have a multicultural campus agency that provides tutorial help and offers study skills. Except for federally-funded "SOS" programs, the University of California-Berkeley is one of the first to target minorities and include an academic center within a residence hall complex.

Peer education is well received by first-year students. The main goals of peer advising programs are the following:

✓ to assist incoming students with adjustment to the university,

✓ to provide leadership opportunities for minority students,

✓ to train peer educators to heighten racial and cultural harmony.

At Tufts University peer advisors serve as resources for incoming Asian-American students.

A residential Minority Aide Program at Michigan State University is intact after 20 years, which is a statement and an example of need. The Residential Education Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln adapted the Minority Aide concept, entitling the staff members "Diversity Aides." At Michigan State, the Minority Aides report to a central Minority Affairs Office which makes their incorporation into individual residence hall staffs difficult. To enhance accountability, the Diversity Aides at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln report to Complex Program Directors (Area Coordinators). The charge to each Diversity Aide is to "counsel" students of their own culture and to do thematic programming, both active and passive, about their culture's customs and traditions. Training includes non-graded quizzes on how much they know about other cultures and cross-cultural "personal space" desires, the development of helping skills, and even instructions on how to design a bulletin board.

Training

Paraprofessional and professional staff are not immune to the internalized bigotry discussed earlier in this chapter. Negative attitudes must be challenged; ignorance must change to empathy (with an accompanying mandate that residents' racial slurs be confronted). Therefore, training must address each of the subgroup characteristics and differences, the nature of hatred and prejudice, and feelings minority students have such as alienation, isolation, and disempowerment. Staff attention to these issues increases if the topics are sequenced into an accredited curriculum, along with other important topics such as suicide and depression, incest, co-dependency and abuse, acquaintance rape, alcohol abuse, problems of adult children of alcoholics, and eating disorders.

As D'Augelli (1989) discovers, gay/lesbian/bisexual training sessions create intense reactions. Skilled, patient facilitators need to expand reasoning with alternative viewpoints. In Perry's (1970) theory of cognitive development, most sophomores and some juniors are still dualistic in their thinking. As a result, many students have difficulty accepting viewpoints that differ from what they believe to be "morally right."

Bowling Green State University reports success with an intensive one-day workshop on diversity and discrimination. Posttest figures show 46% of the staff participants think that a majority of students in their living units would experience discrimination, as opposed to only 21% of the participants on the pretest (Vickio, Dings, & Leopold, 1989).

Gruggs (1985) provides a strong training program at Oklahoma State University sensitizing staff to the pain of geographic separation from parents, particularly for international students. Presenting information on differing world views, she has staff members explore their own feelings and attitudes, then provides counseling simulation exercises.

The University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse is implementing leadership development for minority members of student organizations. As a variation of the LaCrosse program, the Campus Activities, Housing, and Counseling Center staffs at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, are beginning a project to teach American racial minority "mentors" leadership skills which they, in turn, will take to their minority student organizations.

To judge the overall progress of programming and training on diversity, Hughes (1987) offers a conceptual model which describes six developmental levels of diversity, then provides descriptive behaviors and living patterns. The levels are

✓ negative valuing of diversity,

✓ exploring the meaning of diversity and creating learning opportunities,

✓ gaining acceptance and increasing tolerance of diversity,

✓ creative testing of principles of diversity,

✓ positive valuing of diversity,

✓ building the human community.

Recommendations

Programming

In order to promote a student's growth through any cognitive developmental stage, programming should be appropriate to the student's current stage and then move the reasoning level to one stage higher. For example, here is a walk-through using the Cross (1971) model of racial identity formation. Residents in the *Pre-encounter* stage are denying their culture. Thus, they need to see representatives and role models with a positive view of their own culture.

In the *Encounter* stage, students abandon the EuroAmerican view of the world and grow increasingly aware of oppression, but they have not yet built same-culture support that enhances pride and racial identity. Therefore, students benefit from help in clarifying the discriminatory tension they feel. Participation in panel programming in which students can hear similar concerns is particularly helpful and leads to long-term networking.

Students in *Immersion* have grown angry over the injustices of racism. Support groups for minorities have been a successful programming technique. However, these residents should not be pressured to teach majority students about diversity.

Idealizing one's own cultural heritage comes in the *Immersion-Emersion* stage. These students prefer to be with others of the same culture. Although black students in this stage will not accept much assistance from white residence hall staff members, an advocacy position fostering cultural student organizations is proactive.

In the *Internalization* stage, students begin to feel secure about their racial identity so that anger towards majority members begins to subside. Racially-mixed discussions are now relevant because residents have the support of same-culture relationships.

The final stage, *Internalization-Commitment*, enables residents to interact comfortably with those of the same and different cultures. They express their newly-developed positive ethnic identity through involvements on behalf of the entire group. They take action on eradicating prejudice by seeking out leadership roles in majority and minority organizations and hall councils. Staff members can facilitate the development of residents at this highest, inclusive level by providing resources, insights, and requesting their assistance in diversity programming. (C. M. Gabele, personal communication, July 13, 1990)

Clearly, as students progress through these stages in the Cross (1971) model, different programming needs arise. Thus, to meet the needs of these diverse groups at varying levels of identity formation, administrators can provide an array of programming and an encouraging environment that invites, but does not pressure, minority participation.

Besides an array of programming to meet the needs of students in the various stages of the Cross (1971) model, administrators must also be aware of the dynamics of cross-racial counseling. For example, studies by Parham and Helms (1981) suggest the following:

✓ students in the *Pre-encounter* stage want white counselors,

✓ those in the *Encounter* stage are anti-white and want only black counselors,

- ✓ those in the *Immersion-Emersion* and *Internalization* stages show decreasing rejection of white assistance but still prefer black counselors.

Further, Parham and Helms (1985a) correlate low self-esteem with *Pre-encounter* and *Immersion* stages, with greater self-esteem and higher self-actualizing tendencies appearing in the *Encounter* stage (Parkam, & Helms, 1985b). These findings dictate the necessity of having both black and white role models on residence hall staffs as well as programs assessing and enhancing self-esteem.

Other recommendations about programming include the following:

- Ensure there are activities of interest to non-white cultures. Suen (1983) cautions that without non-white events, the cycle of social isolation is perpetuated.
- Urge floor members' attendance at cultural and minority events (e.g., international food bazaars, gay/lesbian films, presentations by the League of Human Dignity).
- Push for ongoing programming throughout the academic calendar rather than a Diversity Day, Hispanic Heritage Month, or Black History Month.
- Separate issues of sexual preference from ethnicity when programming. Mixing these two topics can confuse first-year students who are beginning to face issues of diversity.
- Do not expect adult students to attend activities targeted at undergraduate residents. Instead, create living communities in which the companionship needs of adult students can be met.
- Integrate the development of spirituality into hall educational programming (Hughes, 1987).

Support and Assistance

Find enticements to bring faculty into the halls. While benefiting all students, Astin (1982) finds that favorable relations with faculty, especially for underprepared and non-white students, greatly increase student success.

Likewise, have financial aid counselors and academic advisers help residents prior to registration periods in the residence hall (a hall main lounge, for instance). Also, provide tutorial assistance, especially for math and writing courses, on an ongoing basis in the halls. Moreover, placing vocational rehabilitation professionals in offices within the halls is invaluable to handicapped residents and their aides.

Recruitment of Residence Hall Staffs

To bring more cross-racial representation and role modeling into the housing system, recruit at minority organization meetings. Provide detailed expectations (particularly about paperwork) during student staff selection processes, and include questions about diversity during all interviews.

Burnout of Minority Residents and Paraprofessional Staff

Administrators often use the technique of selecting minority students to promote diversity. A few minority leaders may surface and may be asked to serve on every committee as spokespersons for their group. As a result, their grades can suffer, and those minority residents may experience burnout.

Also, recognize that minority cultures may have a different perspective of time as task deadlines are assigned. Adjust the goal-accomplishment and directives accordingly to avoid staff conflict and discouragement.

Create a Welcoming Environment

Above all, be inclusive in all residence life approaches. Have pluralistic decor visible in offices, and assure that foods indigenous to other cultures are offered. Conversely, sensitize food service staff about the dietary prohibitions of Jews and Muslims related to their religious doctrines.

Challenge staff on the image they project. The following questions serve as a checklist for assessing an environment supportive of diversity in a residence hall.

- ✓ Are diverse groups represented in graphics or pictures on publicity posters?
- ✓ Does the decor on room doors and/or hanging in rooms present an inviting or inhibiting statement of personal views to diverse groups?
- ✓ Do floor members see staff members visiting and interacting with people of different races, religions, and sexual orientation?
- ✓ Are minority students encouraged to run for floor government offices or staff jobs?
- ✓ Are all cultural holidays acknowledged on the floor? Are community agreements written that discourage racial slurs and jokes?
- ✓ Are floor meetings held to discuss the hurt that is detrimental to others when graffiti appears?

After consulting with university attorneys, spell out in housing policy manuals that abusive, denigrating speech or physical violence is unacceptable behavior. Warn students that such discriminatory harassment may lead to contract cancellation. Teach individuals and groups how better to communicate anger through exercises from Lerner's (1985) *Dance of Anger*.

Initiate the formation of minority councils within the hall student government structure. Empower minority residents to create change by teaching them leadership skills.

Finally, be authentic. Openly acknowledge sociocultural differences (Turner, Chennault, & Mulkerne, 1981). Continue to learn actively about minority residents by reading multicultural books and journals.

Conclusion

This chapter shows the immense impact residence hall living can have on increasing awareness and appreciation of differences among minority and white first-year students. With knowledge about different cultural characteristics and common problems faced by subcultures as they interact with the dominant system, residence hall staff can predict and explain behaviors. Furthermore, staff are in the optimum position to assist diverse groups of first-year students through counseling and programming interventions. No doubt that such sensitized environments, with well-trained professional and student staff, will increase student satisfaction, development, and persistence through college.

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Chapter 12

The Joys and Sorrows of Moral and Intellectual Maturation

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This chapter addresses the following goals as outlined in the Introduction:

7 Provide social and educational programs which help students fulfill academic and developmental competencies

9 Allow first-year students to develop a tolerance and appreciation of individual, cultural, and racial differences

12 Work to create an understanding of the ethos that the university is an interactive community of scholars

For those entrusted with the responsibility for shaping the first-year experience of the nation's colleges and universities, the college residence hall represents a tremendous, and largely untapped, opportunity to promote positive human growth and moral development. The success of the Sierra Project at the University of California, Irvine, demonstrates the possibility of promoting moral maturity within the dual context of residential living and formal academic course work.

The themes of this chapter intertwine in the crucible for human development which is the residence hall of the first college year. Late adolescence and the transition to young adulthood are periods in the life span where enduring patterns of thinking are formed initially and take substance from the experience of the personal and professional moral dilemmas of college curricular and extracurricular life.

For those entrusted with responsibility for shaping the first-year experience of the nation's colleges and universities, the college residence hall represents a tremendous and largely untapped opportunity to promote positive human growth. The reasons why the residence hall experiences of first-year students represent such an untapped opportunity are expressed in the following themes:

- The college years should provide an opportunity for young people to decide for themselves key dimensions of the purpose of an educated and reflective life.

- The pace of moral maturity accelerates during the college years, and academic and experiential programs can modulate and enhance that acceleration.

- The experience of being away for the first time from previously psychologically dominant family and high school peers serves to enhance the potential impact of new ways of thinking about ideas and personal encounters.

- The maturation of research on that portion of life-span developmental psychology which studies the growth of moral reasoning has revealed that it is possible to assess reliably an individual's level of moral reasoning. Further, formal education has been found to have a critical positive relationship to moral reasoning, and a properly sequenced stage relevant curriculum can be especially influential on late adolescents.

In the sections of this chapter which follow, these intertwining themes will be developed further. There are two value statements, however, which underlie the presentation.

The Basic Value Statements

The first value statement is that the college years ought to be a time where moral maturation is a central focus for students and where the responsibility of college educators is to provide a context where moral issues can be considered reflectively. The title for this chapter, "The Joys and Sorrows of Moral and Intellectual Maturation," is a line from a *Doonesbury* segment. In one of those priceless commencement vignettes by Gary Trudeau which have appeared over the years, the speaker is presented as decrying the emphasis on premature professionalism, the obsessive concern for the future, and the chilling competition which have dominated the last four years for the graduating seniors. He goes on to state,

> It could have been more than that. This college offered you a sanctuary, a place to experience *process*, to *feel* the present as you moved through it, to *embrace* both the joys and sorrows of moral and intellectual maturation! It needn't have been just another way-station. . . (Trudeau, 1971).

The key point for college educators is that it is *they* who define the characteristics of an undergraduate education in two profound ways: in their control of the curriculum and in their definition of the policies and procedures which govern life outside the classroom. It is essentially the choice of faculty, trustees, and administration whether they elect to structure undergraduate education as "just another way-station" or as a sanctuary in which to embrace "both the joys and sorrows of moral and intellectual maturation."

The second value statement is that the decade of the 1980s served to create a new mythology about the dominant villains of society. Mostly gone are the bank robbers of yesteryear who were battled relentlessly by the Texas Rangers and the Untouchables. In their place are the most highly educated and privileged members of society. These new villains, mastering the skills but not the moral values provided by college and graduate educations, have made an art form out of robbing the savings and loan industry and America's financial markets. Whether it is the greed and excess of the Wall Street takeover mania or the billions of dollars stolen through fraudulent manipulation of Lincoln Savings and Columbia Savings and a host of others, the common thread is the criminal misuse of some of the finest graduate and professional university educations in the United States.

Such a circumstance is reminiscent of the ethical problems of previous decades, the Watergate scandals of the 1970s (lest we forget that the Iran-Contragate of the 1980s was not an original!) or the haunting title of David Halberstam's powerful book, *The Best and the Brightest*, on how America got into the Vietnam quagmire in the 1960s. Morally insensitive actions by the leadership of a society is not a new phenomena to the late 20th century. But the fragile interdependence of life on the planet, the awesome power for destruction of advanced technology, and the continuing layers of inhumanity around the globe simply mandate more sensitive ethical leadership for the starting decades of the 21st century; and it is that generation of global and community leadership which is in attendance at colleges and graduate schools today.

The Special Responsibility of Colleges and Universities

America's colleges and universities have a special responsibility for training the next generation of society's leadership. A university education can provide a firm foundation in the moral obligations of responsibility in a democracy and can instruct about the ethical dimensions of technical and professional actions.

Pope John Paul II issued an Encyclical on May 2, 1991, on the general subject of giving capitalism what was called a "human face." Its implications go well beyond the Catholic church and contain a useful lesson for secular higher education. He directed attention to the existence of a form of ownership, "the possession of know-how, technology, and skill." It is insufficient to direct all of this ownership to the pursuit of profit.

> Profit is a regulator of the life of a business, but it is not the only one; other human and moral factors must be considered which, in the long term, are at least equally important for the life of a business. (Pope John Paul II, *New York Times*, May 3, 1991, Section A, p. 7)

In the American system of secular education, colleges and universities have the principal opportunity of all the institutions of society for educating the next generation of leaders about the "human and moral factors" which must be considered. And that returns us to the title of this chapter, "The Joys and Sorrows of Moral and Intellectual Maturation," and the first-year experience in the residence hall.

The First-Year Experience in the Residence Hall

The effects of student life in the college residence hall have been extensively studied, and the voluminous research literature contrasts commuter versus residential students and various residential populations (Astin, 1968; Astin, 1977). Of more recent vintage is the body of research literature which focuses more directly on the first-year experience in the residence hall in relation to moral reasoning.

Beginning in 1975, the staff of the Sierra Project (Whiteley & Associates, 1982; Loxley & Whiteley, 1986) began both a longitudinal study and a curriculum intervention designed to raise the level of moral reasoning in college students and to study the long-term growth of college students on the moral dimension of human experience.

Underpinning the curriculum was an assumption that it would be possible to challenge students more if the environment was as supportive as we could design it. This notion is derived directly from the work of Nevitt and Sanford (1982) and others on the importance of a psychological sense of community (Whiteley & Associates, 1982).

Within the Sierra Project the effort to create a psychological sense of community took several forms. In staffing the residence hall, a sophomore trained in empathy skills and community-building skills was assigned to each suite of eight new students (Whiteley & Associates, 1982). In the formal academic class, there were many exercises designed to promote a sense of community (Loxley & Whiteley, 1986). Organized extracurricular experiences were selected in large part because of their contribution to the creation of community.

Building on a sense of community, the first-year residence hall was the location for a four-unit class offered each fall, winter, and spring quarter of the academic year. It was required for all residents of the hall, and most instruction occurred there. Students received four units of graduation credit on a "pass/no pass" basis with full-time enrollment considered to be 16 units.

Key Components of the First-Year Experience

The key components of the first-year experience in the residence hall fell into two general categories:

- ✓ the structure of the hall itself,
- ✓ the content of the formal curriculum.

There were six key components:

1. *The provision of 12 units of academic credit and required participation in the academic program.* This feature allowed us access to a significant portion (25%) of a student's formal academic time. This turned out to be a small enough amount that students in the humanities, social sciences, biological sciences, and physical sciences could make normal progress toward their lower division and departmental requirements toward graduation.

   Requiring informed participation for all residents assured that the structured curricular and extracurricular experiences would be a salient feature of the atmosphere of life in the residence hall. This made it possible for the basic ideas around which the Sierra experience was designed to have a more pervasive impact.

2. *The presence of more mature role models in the residence halls.* The provision of more mature role models was especially important because Sierra was created for only first-year students, and a dominant characteristic was a similarity of experience and point-of-view. Further, the new student population turned out to be highly conventional and quite homogeneous in psychological outlook on moral and ethical issues. While ethnically diverse, the students shared a common psychological profile of allegiance to the primary group of friends, a definition of fairness in terms of the rules and expectations of known peers, and a desire to avoid conflict wherever possible.

The regular presence of older students and adults with a more complex outlook made a vital contribution to an educational environment intended to stimulate thinking. In each suite of eight new students there was a sophomore staff member. An upper-level student served as resident advisor and formal representative of the housing administration. The instructor for the academic class was available several times a week. And every student had to write journal entries on a regular basis which were read and commented upon by either one of the staff members identified above or by an adult member of the university community who volunteered time for the journal-reader assignment.

3. *The greater responsibility for shaping their educational experience which was demanded of students.* Students at the start of their first year had been accustomed to teachers who defined the content of their instructional experience and who presented subject matter where the answers were, for the most part, clearly defined. This previous instructional experience was quite congruent with the tendency of students to think in dualistic terms of black and white and right and wrong (Perry, 1970).

   Since a clear purpose of the curriculum was to stimulate active thinking about more complex alternatives, a goal of the instructors was to motivate students toward a more personally involved approach to learning.

   The approach to motivating students to more active learning was multifaceted. The regular classroom exercises were intended to engage students and force them to take a stand on an issue they may not have thought about before. By the start of the spring quarter, first-year students were challenged to collaborate with each other in the preparation of actual classes.

4. *The active collaboration between faculty and staff in the planning of curricular lessons.* There was an active collaboration between the student staff and the faculty in the planning of individual classes. What student staff contributed, especially the sophomores who lived in the residence hall, was accurate information about what had been the impact of previous lessons and what was going on in the informal discussions about the subject matter of the class.

   There was also a generational gap, since the new students were 18 or 19, and the professional staff were in their 30s or 40s. It was very helpful to have cross-generational dialogues about elements of the subject matter prior to presenting it in class. One reason for the consistently high student evaluations of the class is the effort which the six sophomores and the professional staff put into curriculum refinement.

5. *The formal research component which provided regular information about student developmental status and the effects of the curriculum.* The formal research component accomplished three goals. The *survey design* involved testing at the beginning and end of the first year, then at the end of the sophomore, junior, and senior years. A select sample was tested and re-interviewed eight to ten years after graduation.

   This longitudinal survey design addressed the question of whether change occurred and the duration of those changes. The *topical design* investigated whether certain portions of the intervention produced specific changes in first-year students. Data from a variety of sources were collected before and after specific modules of the curriculum. The *intensive design* evaluated individual variation in response to the intervention. The focus was on in-depth case studies of individual students.

A factor in the credibility of the Sierra Project has been its research base. There has been academic credit granted for the course taught in the residence hall since its inception. The contributions of the housing personnel have been subjected to regular review through both student evaluations and the topical design. The research results from the *survey* and *intensive* designs have become part of the professional literature and, therefore, subject to regular peer review and scholarly commentary.

6. *The provision of specific aspects of the formal curriculum.* The formal Sierra curriculum consisted of ***ten separate modules*** as follows:

✓ ***Survival Skills.*** What first-year students need to know that most seniors already do: how to organize their time, how to study effectively, and how to prepare for and take examinations.

✓ ***Community Building.*** Helping students work together to create an atmosphere of openness, trust, and group support in an environment characterized by conflict resolution through democratic decision making.

✓ ***Conflict Resolution in Society.*** Participation in a commerically available simulation game in which students are given vaguely structured roles and allowed to form their own society. Emphasis is placed on survival issues, personal goals, problems of power and authority, and what type of society provides the most good for the most people. Principles of fairness and justice as well as conflict resolution skills are involved throughout the game.

✓ ***Empathy and Social Perspective-Taking.*** Basic listening and communication skills for the development of empathy--defined as the ability to understand the point of view of another and of the ability to communicate that understanding.

✓ ***Socialization.*** What are people like now? How did they come to be that way? Values and lifestyles were examined as salient factors and pressures in the socialization process.

✓ ***Sex-Role Choices.*** How socialization by gender affects current values, behaviors, and interests.

✓ ***Race Roles.*** How race relates to socialization. Examines stereotyping, racial values and attitudes, and cross-cultural relationships.

✓ ***Assertion Training.*** Enhances relationships by helping students learn to identify the personal rights involved in a conflict situation and to resolve that situation, assuring their own legitimate rights without violating those of others.

✓ ***Life and Career Planning.*** Students explore decision making. This module helps students in the decision-making process by exposing them to a variety of life and career options.

✓ ***Community Service.*** Provides the opportunity for students to work with people with real problems in a naturalistic setting; allowing them to apply the skills they have been learning in Sierra in a community setting.

For readers interested in learning more about each of the modules, Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 of

Loxley and Whiteley (1986) provide a general background and indicate what was offered on a weekly basis in the residence hall.

There were four general goals for offering the curriculum. They were to

✓ facilitate the transition from high school to college life;

✓ stimulate psychological development from late adolescence to early adulthood, particularly on dimensions associated with character;

✓ foster a consideration of future lifestyle choices and career decisions;

✓ challenge learners to apply their educational experiences to problems in the broader community through community services.

Each element of necessary classroom preparation was documented. The reason for this attention to detail was so that instructors and housing personnel in other colleges and universities could replicate portions of our work and adapt it to the special circumstances of their institutions.

Feedback from the student staff and the new students was an important factor in modifying the curriculum. After the first year of the curriculum intervention which occurred in 1975, information from the *survey* design and the *intensive* design convinced us to change the emphasis of weekly exercises. We found that for our specific population, we were placing too much emphasis on issues related to promoting a transition from conventional to post-conventional thinking and not enough emphasis on the moral challenges for students who had just made a transition from pre-conventional to conventional thinking in the Kohlberg (1969) theory of moral development. The invaluable information allowed the modification of the curriculum to make it more congruent with the psychological characteristics of the particular student population at the University of California, Irvine.

After surveying the student evaluations from the *topical design*, a number of aspects of the formal curriculum were singled out by the professional staff as contributing most to student development in the area of moral maturation:

✓ the assertion training model which developed students' skills in identifying the rights of oneself and others and learning to resolve conflicts fairly,

✓ the empathy training module which increased students' perceptions of how other people experience situations,

✓ the consideration of sex roles and race roles which stimulated more complex thinking about ways of relating to other people.

This latter aspect of the formal curriculum, rethinking previously unexamined beliefs, was imbedded throughout the modules and represented a conscious effort by the faculty to focus on this aspect of human experience. All of this effort occurred in the context of creating a psychological sense of community.

New Opportunities for Housing Programs to Promote the Moral Maturity

The experience of the Sierra Project has shown the possibility of promoting moral maturity within the dual context of residential living and formal academic course work. With active collaboration of housing personnel and faculty, neither the extracurricular sense of community which is such a revered part of college life nor academic progress toward graduation has had to be sacrificed.

The special contributions of housing personnel are vital to the process of promoting moral maturity in college students. It is the housing staff who control roommate assignment policy and the selection, training, and supervision of residence advisors and student staff. Most individuals professionally trained in housing administration or college student personnel work have had formal instruction in program evaluation. This makes it possible for them to administer properly the *survey* design and *topical* design evaluations which are so important to offering credible programs in moral education which are based in college residence halls.

Housing administrators often have assignment responsibility for some of the most attractive meeting facilities on campus. The formal Sierra class met frequently in the living room of Sierra Hall. The smaller living rooms of each of the six suites also proved to be attractive informal gathering places. Access for instructional purposes to attractive locations in the housing area of campus can be a very positive feature for both faculty and staff.

Housing personnel can make an additional vital contribution to a moral education program by informing prospective students of the opportunity. The housing office is in contact with entering students, and our experience was that they were able to explain in a timely and effective manner what the project was about and what participation in the project would mean. In fact, with the assistance from student staff, the communications written by the Housing Office about Sierra were far more persuasive to entering students than faculty authored course descriptions.

The most intangible, but perhaps the most important, contribution made by the housing office was the creation of a psychological sense of community. The countless human transactions over everything from the reporting of lost meal tickets or roommate conflicts to feelings of loneliness or fear of failure occur in an emotional climate. That climate can be one which fosters trust, openness, and feelings of emotional security. If it is, it will contribute in an ongoing way to the creation and maintenance of a sense of community. A shared sense of valuing between housing staff and students of both educational endeavors and the struggle for personal growth also contributes to a psychological sense of community.

It is simply not possible for faculty and administration to contribute on a daily basis to the intangibles of community which are the product of the countless personal encounters of residential life. Simply stated, the housing program and its staff have a vital role to play in the implementation of programs designed to promote moral maturity.

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Chapter 13

Assessment and Evaluation

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This chapter addresses the following goal as outlined in the Introduction:

13 Accurately assess and measure the impact of the residential first year

Assessing the impact of residence hall programs, services, and staff on new students should be an integral component of a residential first-year initiative. Defining specific outcomes and developing strategies for measuring them are critical issues facing educational administrators today. Decisions regarding programs and resource allocations can be greatly enhanced through effective assessment strategies.

Many people who have read the preceding chapters in this monograph may indeed have well-developed "wish lists." That is, they wish that the goals for the residential first year, as outlined at the beginning of this monograph could be achieved immediately by implementing many, most, or all of the excellent programs and recommendations described in subsequent chapters. Of course, the desires of residence life professionals to contribute in positive ways to the experiences of first-year students in residence may border on the infinite; however, most institutional representatives have access to resources which are finite and, in many cases, substantially more limited than they might wish.

Since most colleges and universities cannot afford to undertake all potentially worthwhile projects, priorities must be determined; decisions must be made; and the most needed, productive, and cost-effective projects must be selected. But how does one assess the needs of incoming first-year students and evaluate the extent to which various programs or services are successful in meeting those needs? Which endeavors are most beneficial, particularly in relationship to their costs? Which new programs should be initiated? And which current programs should be repeated, expanded, revised, or discontinued?

The goal of this chapter is to encourage those who work with first-year students in residence halls to consider several issues related to the premise that, "from the campus practitioner's perspective ... assessment and evaluation must play the crucial role in determining goal achievement, program effectiveness, and how to bring about improvements" (Lenning, 1989, p. 327).

Research Challenges for Practitioners and Students

Higher education research has received considerable criticism on the grounds that it tends to address very narrow or specific questions; seldom takes into account the complexities of broader institutional contexts; often emphasizes quantitative methods which non-statisticians find difficult to understand; and produces results which are not generalizable and not useful to those who are determining policies, making decisions, or working directly with students (Layzell, 1990). Keller (1985) referred to such research as "trees without fruit" in the title of an article which discussed research which does not respond to the needs of practitioners, is not applicable to decisions regarding critical issues in higher education, and does not contribute to the improvement of higher education practices.

It seems reasonable to suggest that research regarding the impact of the first-year residential experience may benefit from the direct involvement of practitioners and students. Practitioners often have clearer visions of the "big picture" based on their familiarity with current issues, the needs of first-year students, and the multiple factors at work within the residential or broader institutional environment. Furthermore, they may be in better positions to use qualitative and continuous methods in examining the multiple aspects of student experiences which may contribute to measured outcomes. While much research focuses on what changes occur in student development during the first year, first-year students and those who work directly with them may have valuable insights with respect to more useful questions regarding why, how, where, when, and under what circumstances such changes are most likely to take place.

If the information needs associated with assessment and evaluation of a specific activity require the design of new research instruments, the statistical analyses of data, or other research skills, someone with those skills must be involved, preferably not merely as an external consultant working in isolation, but as an integral part of the team that plans, implements, and evaluates the project. The researcher's contributions to the total effort will be strongly dependent on the decisions made by and guidance received from all other members of the team. The evaluation process must be seen as everyone's business and not solely the responsibility of the researcher. Practitioners and students may most effectively contribute to that process by meeting three major challenges:

1. Establishing Goals

All endeavors requiring the allocation of human, material, or financial resources should have purposes, goals, and objectives that are clearly stated and understood by everyone involved from the very beginning. Desired outcomes provide guidance and direction throughout the project implementation process and often serve as standards or referents in evaluating actual outcomes. Of course, many projects have unintended or unexpected outcomes that should be examined also in the evaluation process, but the degree to which a program is judged to be successful most often coincides with the degree to which that program meets its stated goals.

Goals for students should be identified and evaluated very carefully (Hutchings, 1989). This process often involves the work of committees that include representation and/or input from staff in all sectors and at all levels of the sponsoring units and from interested constitutent groups with perhaps the most important one being the students themselves. Some very admirable goals may be too global, too difficult to assess, too impractical in light of institutional realities, or too difficult for first-year students to accomplish in one year. Sanoff, Glastris, Ellis-Simons, and Rachlin (1989) described the first year as "unkind, ungentle" in noting that first-year students experience many pressures associated with unrealistic expectations. "Administrators reiterate that most first-year students simply can't be expected to decide what to do with the rest of their lives" (Sanoff et al., 1989, p. 57). Nor should first-year students be expected to achieve the ultimate in academic excellence or work through all the stages and complete all the tasks associated with various theories of student development during their first year in college. Goals should be specific, appropriate for the entering first-year students in question, and feasible within the given residential and institutional context.

Many program goals are based on perceived needs, which represent a discrepancy between what currently exists and what is desired. Thus it is essential that decision makers be familiar with entering student characteristics and work with students and others in determining what characteristics are judged to be desirable. Only then can they design programs or other interventions which will be most effective in helping first-year students move forward in their learning, growth, and development.

Another set of goals are those specifically related to the assessment process. Aulepp and Delworth (1976) describe an ecosystem model for assessing and improving campus environments with the assistance of students, staff, and faculty and note that the step immediately following the development of a planning team is determining what to assess. Precisely what is it that team members, decision makers, students, or others want to know in reference to the project in question? Why do they want this information? And what do they plan to do with the information once they have it? Clear answers to these questions in the earliest stages of planning will assist those who design the assessment process, collect, analyze, and organize the information sought, and communicate that information to those who want or need it for specific purposes.

2. Gathering and Organizing Information

The assessment process requires the systematic collection and organization of pertinent information. This information often describes the ends and occasionally the beginnings of a project when the means of getting from the beginning to the end may be of greatest interest or concern. "Information about outcomes alone does little to suggest which educational processes are responsible for those outcomes, and little, therefore, about how to make improvements" (Hutchings, 1989, p. 3). Hutchings describes the need to assess what occurs at every step along the way by using an analogy which describes a movie with scenes of important student experiences versus snapshots of the student at the end and perhaps the beginning of the process. While both snapshots and movies may be useful, she recommends that assessment be an integral part of the entire planning or programming process.

Schuh (1988) notes that assessments regarding students in residence most commonly take the form of needs assessment and environmental assessment:

> Needs assessments can be used in determining the direction for programs, activities, and interventions that can be planned for and in cooperation with the resident student. An environmental assessment can be planned to determine the impact of the environment on students, and their impact on the environment. (p. 236)

Many experienced professionals who work with first-year students in residence have an intuitive sense of student needs, interests, concerns, and activities. Similarly, these professionals may understand the complex nature of the interactions among students and various aspects of the environment. However, given the increasingly diverse nature of the college student population, it may be more important than ever to attempt regularly to confirm and, if necessary, modify one's assumptions in reference to new generations of first-year students and their experiences in residence halls.

Fortunately, a great deal of information regarding incoming students is available within most institutions. Most often, demographic characteristics of the first-year class, high school performance and admissions test scores, and selections of majors of first-year students may also provide information concerning their motivations for coming to college, their opinions on current issues, and their interests in extracurricular activities. Housing officers may examine contract requests to assess changes in proportions of students requesting coed versus single-sex halls, living-learning centers or residential colleges, special interest floors or halls; alcohol or drug-free living units, and non-smoking roommates.

New information regarding first-year students once they arrive on campus is generated continuously. Decision makers should receive orientation and other program reports and evaluations, summaries of student use of facilities and services, incident reports on topics ranging from roommate conflicts or student complaints to student illness or disciplinary concerns, room change requests, food service reports, maintenance and other service requests, financial accounting records, minutes of residence hall and other student government meetings, and reports from residential life and other staff who work with first-year students in residence halls. Additional information may be available in the form of summary reports from the campus counseling center, registrar's office, financial aid office, student activities organization, academic units, and other sources. Clearly, all available information should be reviewed by those who wish to know who their first-year students are and what their needs might be.

In addition to gathering and making good use of all the information already available, staff and faculty may wish to generate new information, particularly in reference to the evaluation of a specific program or other endeavor. It is normally the responsibility of the project planning team to identify information needs and develop assessment procedures. Occasionally, project information needs can be met by the development and maintenance of good record-keeping systems, a process which has been simplified by the use of computer

130

systems commonly available on today's campus. Sometimes survey or other research instruments are developed by one or more members of the project team, and sometimes decisions are made to use already published instruments.

Another method of assessing student satisfaction, student adjustment, or student problems and concerns is to ask the students themselves directly. This may be done by using one of many survey instruments available, by designing one's own survey, by interviewing individual students, by gathering small numbers of students for "focus group" discussions, or simply by sitting down with students in a dining room at mealtime and communicating with them informally. To many, it may seem obvious that if you want to know what first-year students think, feel, believe, value, do, etc., you could simply ask them, and you would probably find that most would be happy to tell you. Some staff or faculty may hesitate to use this direct approach on the grounds that students would be reporting only their perceptions (which may indeed be biased), as opposed to describing truth. However, consider the premise that what people perceive is what exists for them. Whether or not student perceptions accurately represent reality, we cannot ignore them. It may well be true that an experienced housing professional may have a more comprehensive or sophisticated perception of the residence hall environment and its impact on first-year students than do many first-year students themselves. Sometimes it is very difficult to look at residence halls through the eyes of first-year students, particularly if the view is limited or blurred, or if we do not like or agree with what they see. Still, we must acknowledge that what we see in the environment is secondary to what they see in terms of influencing or determining how they will respond to or function within that environment.

The study of human behavior is far from being an exact science. Therefore, multiple measures or a variety of indicators should be used in examining person-environment interactions. Housing professionals must consider carefully all relevant information before drawing conclusions, as the subsequent decisions they make may indeed affect the quality of a student's life experience on the college campus.

Consider the following goal of the residential first year, as listed in the Introduction: "Help first-year students make a smooth transition to the university community." The types of indicators one might use in assessing the extent to which such a goal has been achieved would, of course, depend on one's definition of a "smooth transition." However, it seems reasonable to suggest that retention (both in college and in residence halls), personal and social adjustment, participation in student activities or student groups, academic achievement, and student satisfaction with environmental variables ranging from courses and professors to residence hall facilities or roommates may be indicative of an effective transition to college. In contrast, attrition, disciplinary incidents, alcohol abuse, academic difficulties, course withdrawals, interpersonal conflicts, dissatisfaction with various elements of college life, failure to make friends or become involved in activities of interest, and loneliness or depression which may be distinguished from the homesickness initially experienced by many first-year students, may serve as indicators that some students have found their college transition to be problematic.

Information regarding many of these indicators normally comes to the attention of administrators in the form of reports concerning student withdrawal from college— housing contract cancellations, requests for roommate changes, disciplinary incidents, counseling referrals, student group memberships, student activities participation, academic progress (e.g., credits completed), and academic achievement (e.g., grades received). In addition, staff reports or staff-meeting minutes normally summarize both positive and negative aspects of student experiences or behaviors. Thus, many indirect or "unobtrusive" measures may serve as indicators of student transition to college.

In planning an effective evaluation process pertaining to any aspect of the first-year residential experience, the importance of reviewing the relevant professional literature cannot be overstated. This process often assists in identifying colleagues with common interests, recognizing the successful and unsuccessful attributes of similar endeavors to assist first-year students in residence at other institutions, and avoiding problems or unnecessary expenses associated with "reinventing the wheel." In addition, authors may describe the procedures used to evaluate projects similar to those the reader wishes to undertake. Reviews of such procedures may help in identifying methods, instruments, or items which may be appropriate for assessing needs or evaluating programs on one's own campus.

The National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience (Shanley & Hearns, 1991) has published an annotated bibliography on the freshman year experience. In addition, the Association of College and University Housing Officers - International (ACUHO-I) provides an extensive bibliography of books, periodicals, reports, dissertations, and other materials directly related to residence halls (Blimling, Gehring, Gibson, Grimm, Schuh, & McKinnon, 1987).

Other publications pertaining to first-year students, residence halls, academic adjustment, student development, programs and activities, and other topics discussed in this monograph may be identified via educational reference systems provided in most college and university libraries. Other important sources of information are the program brochures for professional conferences. Even if one cannot be present at a conference or attend all sessions of interest, a review of the programs presented may assist in identifying persons who have pertinent and valuable information to share.

In addition to a more global review of the professional literature, reviews of reference material related specifically to assessment and evaluation of topics pertaining to the residential first year are recommended. Documents which may be particularly useful to those wishing to study issues addressed in this monograph are as follows:

Evaluating the Freshman Year Experience. The National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience provides *Guidelines for Evaluating The Freshman Year Experience* (Gardner, 1990). These guidelines provide sample questions for those who wish to conduct institutional self-assessments. While one section is devoted to residence life questions specifically, questions within all sections pertain to the needs and interests of housing professionals who take a holistic approach to student development in acknowledging that the experiences of first-year students in residence halls cannot always be separated from the remainder of their academic, campus, or other life experiences.

Evaluating Housing and Residential Life Programs. The Council for the Advancement of Standards for Student Services/Development Programs (CAS) has developed sets of standards and guidelines for many sectors of higher education. Associated with the *Standards and Guidelines for Housing and Residential Life Programs* (1988) is a *Self-Assessment Guide* (Council for the Advancement of Standards, 1988), listing sample items or questions which may be used by those wishing to conduct evaluations of facilities, services, staff, and programs in order to assess the extent to which various standards and guidelines are already being met and to identify specific areas which may warrant attention or need improvement.

Environmental and Student Development Assessment. Commission IX (Assessment) of the American College Personnel Association provides a *Clearinghouse List of Environmental and Student Development Assessment Tools* (ACPA, 1990). This document provides brief descriptions of many instruments along with the names and addresses of authors or publishers who may be contacted for additional information. Many of these instruments pertain to topics addressed in this monograph. For example, these would include

- ✓ measures of student reaction or adjustment to college
- ✓ perceptions of residence hall or institutional characteristics or climate
- ✓ evaluations of residence hall staff and residence hall living
- ✓ surveys of student interests, opinions, satisfaction, activities, and time usage
- ✓ assessments of student personality characteristics, self-concepts, values, motivations, and goals
- ✓ measures of student learning styles, study skills, and study habits
- ✓ assessments of student development in the social/emotional, moral/ethical, and cognitive/intellectual domains.

Of course, a much greater number and variety of assessment tools are described in the ACPA document, and many other instruments currently available may not have been submitted for inclusion in this clearinghouse list. Assessment tools vary in type, length, quality, cost, and applicability. Thus, it is wise to review several instruments before selecting one which will be most appropriate for achieving a specific goal at a specific institution.

3. Interpreting and Communicating the Findings

Information regarding first-year students and residence halls becomes most valuable when it is interpreted for, communicated to, and actually used by decision makers, students, and others who wish to maximize the impact of the residential first-year experience. Information which is positive in nature (e.g., positive outcomes associated with a specific project of interest) is generally easier, or at least more pleasant, to communicate. However, if sponsors of a program wish to explore new territories or provide new opportunities for students, they "must be bold enough to risk making some mistakes and daring enough to confront the possibility of obtaining some negative results" (Palmer, 1988, p. 6).

Sometimes programs fail in one or more respects, particularly the first time they are implemented. When this occurs, the qualitative aspects of the assessment, the records of events or factors that may have affected the program at each step all along the way, and the insights and expertise of students and staff who worked most closely with the project become critical in the process of examining exactly what happened and why. Seven reasons why programs fail are identified by Hurst and Jacobson (1985). If the project team can identify specific reasons (based on problems observed or issues discussed) related to a program's failure to achieve some of its goals, recommendations regarding how these problems can be avoided in the future should also be included in reports of the findings. If the program itself is judged to be worthwhile, though in need of some modifications, improvements can be made and the program may prove to be substantially more successful in the future.

Even when a project appears to have been successful in achieving its intended outcomes, identifying exactly how, why, when, where, or for whom it was successful is most helpful in improving other ongoing programs or designing new programs. While cause-and-effect relationships involving various aspects of human behavior are very difficult to prove, a successful program is often indicative of a good student-environment "fit." This is often difficult to achieve within dynamic systems created when various elements of a complex living environment interact with the personalities, lifestyles, needs, and other attributes of a very diverse student population. Consequently, any insight which would contribute to understanding exactly which aspects of the total system "work" in achieving various goals for some first-year students may be extremely valuable in subsequent attempts to improve the residential experience for other first-year students.

The complexities of student-environment interactions are well known to most practitioners. Those persons involved in the assessment and evaluation process have the task of trying to identify precisely what affected whom and in what ways. For example, consider a study involving the installation of computers in a first-year residence hall. Some may believe the outcomes of such a project would be fairly simple to assess. However, it appears that a complex network of intervening factors can influence the outcomes. In reference to findings that the first-year students as a group tended to share orientations toward time and strategies or patterns for using time to achieve personal, social, computing, study, work, and other goals, Anderson and McClard (1988) noted that "the student world is one full of randomly interwoven events over which students have little control, and to which they must respond and develop specific time strategies which will allow them to accomplish the immediate tasks at hand, and to accomplish their greater goals" (p. 26). Bader and Anderson (1988) report that these first-year students categorize physical spaces within the residence hall for "serious study" versus "social study" or other purposes (p. 1). Students further indicate that their perceptions of the appropriate use of space vary according to the time of day and day of the week. The interaction of time and space perceptions was found to influence who uses the computers, when, and for what purposes. In addition, social interaction patterns within the residence hall, previous experiences with computers, outside structures (some of them related to academic requirements), student orientations toward study or work, abilities to define problems and identify resources for assistance, and other factors are all found to influence the use of the computers by the first-year students living in this residence hall (Anderson, Bader, Larkin, & McClard, 1988).

It should be emphasized that, in many cases, first-year students themselves may be better able than anyone else to identify experiences that have the greatest impact on their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

Conclusion

As noted throughout this monograph, there is substantial evidence that living in a college residence hall has many positive effects on students (Astin, 1977; Astin, 1985; Chickering, 1974; Pascarella, 1985; Wilson, Anderson, & Fleming, 1987). Simply stated, "student involvement and development are enhanced by living on campus" (Astin, 1985, p. 39). Astin (1985) emphasizes that, "nearly all forms of student involvement are associated with greater-than-average changes in first-year student characteristics" (p. 37) and that, "the theory of student involvement suggests that the most precious institutional resource may be student time" (p. 36). Since first-year students spend so much of their out-of-class time where they live, it is essential that institutional officials make every effort to structure the physical environment of the residence hall and the activities which take place within it so as to maximize the amount of student time which is devoted to activities which foster student health, learning, and development. Only through an ongoing process of assessment and evaluation can decision makers receive feedback on the effectiveness of programming and other endeavors in producing a positive residential experience for first-year students.

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Chapter 14

Summary and Conclusions

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So what do all the preceding chapters add up to? Can we really design residence halls to meet the challenges of the 1990s? Can we create living environments that enhance first-year student success? If so, how? In this chapter, I will first review what has stayed the same in residence halls over the past decades and what has changed. I will then offer some advice, based on the wisdom of the authors of this monograph, as well as some of my own musings about how residence halls of the 1990s might be structured to create optimal living environments for *all* students.

What Has Stayed the Same

Our world is changing, our society is changing, and higher education is changing, so it is no surprise that our residence halls are changing. That is not to say, however, that everything is changing. One thing that has not changed is the tremendous power of the residential environment. In the 1970s, research by Astin, Chickering, and others confirmed what we had suspected for centuries: residence halls are good for first-year students, no matter what criteria one chooses. In Chapter 1, John Gardner listed 11 reasons why residence halls are important to first-year students. The bottom line is that first-year students who live in residence halls, compared to first-year students living elsewhere, earn better grades, are more likely to graduate, get more involved in campus life, and are more satisfied with their collegiate experience, to name just a few of the many benefits which accrue from residence halls.

Further, for as long as we have housed students together on our campuses, we have dealt with the typical adjustment problems of new students mentioned by Miltenberger in Chapter 6, including self-esteem, roommates, homesickness, academics, adjustment to freedom, changing parental/family relationships, social adjustments, and sexuality. To that list I would also add alcohol use and abuse since, on most campuses, alcohol is a central focus of students' lives, inside and outside residence halls.

Also, we know that colleges and universities can intentionally influence the academic and personal development of students in residence halls through the assignment of students, staffing, programming, policies, rules, and regulations. In fact, without such structure, chaos can reign, and residence halls can become a destructive, not a constructive influence on new students. To be sure, we need to know more about how our staffing, programming, and other interventions can become more effective. But our ability to structure residence halls in ways that enhance student success is unquestioned. We know we can influence grades and retention, interpersonal relations, career development, identity development, wellness issues, and moral and spiritual development, among other things.

And finally, we have always had and will continue to have the challenge of creating residence halls that are clean, comfortable, affordable, quiet enough, orderly, well maintained, and designed with the creature comforts of students in mind. This challenge may be even greater as we pay the price for the deferred maintenance policies of the '70s and '80s. We must also continue to give attention to our food service, which in the '70s and '80s underwent a remarkable revolution giving students more choices, better quality, and greater quantity, while showing greater sensitivity to their changing nutritional wants.

So in many ways the challenge of creating residence halls that enhance the academic and personal development of new students is building on what we know and what we have done. As we face newer challenges, we must not abandon the "basics" we have spent so much time and effort developing.

What is Changing

We will, however, face some new and difficult challenges in our residence halls in the 1990s and beyond. In spite of the ever present and unchanging issues mentioned above, there are some things that are really quite different than they were when I first walked on my residence hall floor as a scared and excited new student some 35 years ago. Today's new students, I believe, face a more difficult and complex challenge in adjusting to residential living than I did, for many reasons. Likewise, today's residence hall staffs face a much more difficult and complex challenge than I did when I worked as a resident assistant and a hall director in the 1960s.

First, today's new students are much more diverse than ever before. For example, the increased racial and ethnic diversity of residents creates a challenge for both majority and minority first-year students. Many majority students may be facing other first-year students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds for the very first time. They may react variously with anxiety, resentment, indifference, curiosity, support, or even prejudice. Thus minority students may have to deal with a majority that is at best tolerant and at worst hostile. Further, as Jakobsen correctly points out in Chapter 11, minority residents also face the fundamental issues of how to integrate into the campus and residential environment without compromising their cultural traditions. That dilemma means minority students face academic, financial, interpersonal, intragroup, and family issues which can spell the difference between alienation and adaptation.

Second, today's first-year students have to deal with changing gender role definitions. There is no longer a commonly accepted definition of "men" and "women," resulting not only in role confusion, but also in trouble with relationships between the sexes. Women may face "chilly" climates not only in the classroom but in residence halls as well. Sexual harassment and date rape are but a few of the issues that contribute to a "chilly" residence hall climate that negatively affects both men and women.

Third, as gay, lesbian, and bisexual students become more open about their sexual orientation, we can anticipate that many heterosexual residents may react with anxiety, harassment, and even violence. This is not good news for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students who may have to live in a very unfriendly residential environment. In fact, a recent informal poll at Penn State University indicated that one of the major concerns of incoming students was the fear that they might be assigned to a gay or lesbian roommate.

Fourth, today's students are faced with many developmental issues which are far different from those faced by yesterday's new students. Sex is no longer automatically "safe." Consumption of alcohol, for most traditional-aged students, is no longer legal. Careers prepared for today are obsolete tomorrow. Some values are now relative, and even absolute values conflict. Academic competition is fierce, and grades seem more important to careers and graduate work. Roommate relationships become stickier as students diversify by race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. The list could go on almost endlessly. The bottom line is that today's students are faced with a myriad of choices, and that is a mixed blessing. Freedom of choice means making decisions, and making decisions means living with the consequences.

Fifth, there is clear evidence that today's students are coming to our campuses with more problems, more serious problems, and more problems attributable to dysfunctional families. In previous student generations, we dealt with "normal first-year students" with "normal" problems, such as poor grades, career indecision, roommate incompatibility, and so forth. But many of today's students are recovering alcoholics or anorexics, adult children of alcoholics, incest survivors, victims of family violence, have unresolved interpersonal and intrapersonal problems they attribute to the divorce or separation of their parents, and have histories of chronic anxiety, depression, or even suicide attempts. And they bring those histories with them when they check into our residence halls.

And finally, today's students have to deal with safety and security issues that yesterday's students didn't have to deal with. The sex-segregated, locked, and secured residence halls of the past, located in pastoral settings, while limiting residents' freedoms, did provide a more secure living environment. The demise of *in loco parentis* as well as the advent of coeducational halls, open visitation, and urban campuses changed all that, and today's residents are faced with both internal and external threats to their safety and security. Further, new federal and state statutes are requiring campuses to report campus crime statistics, including those in residence halls. We know that residents, non-residents, and non-students can wreak havoc with both residents and facilities. In Chapter 9, Sautter catalogs such problems as theft, vandalism, date rape, invasion of privacy, and physical assault, and suggests ways in which we might make residence halls safer and more secure.

All this means that residence hall staffs are facing issues they never had to deal with before. It's not as though the job wasn't tough enough before all these new issues came along. Residence hall staffs must now be security experts, alcohol and drug diagnosticians and preventionists, sexuality counselors, conflict resolution mediators, gender role experts, crisis interventionists, and race relations experts, in addition to their more traditional roles as advisors, programmers, and disciplinarians.

Recommendations

The challenge, then, is to maintain the "basics" while meeting all the new issues we face in creating a residential environment which enhances student success. I might add that at most institutions, this challenge must be met within existing resources. Much of what I recommend is possible within existing resources if we have the commitment to change. Since John Gardner opened this monograph with a number of reasons why residence halls are important to first-year students, I will close it with recommendations for enhancing student success in residence halls.

- *Know and apply developmental and environmental theory.* Residence hall staff should be thoroughly familiar with student development theories, particularly those which apply to new students. Especially useful are Vincent Tinto's stages of student development in which he sees first-year students passing through stages of separation from their previous environment, transition to their campus environment, and finally incorporation into their campus environment (Tinto, 1987). We must also give our attention to those theories which apply to specific subpopulations, such as racial and ethnic minorities (Cross, 1978; Fleming, 1984; Helms, 1990), women (Gilligan, 1982; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg, & Tarule, 1986), older students (Cross, 1981; Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989), and gay, lesbian, and bisexual students (Cass, 1984).

  We must also recognize that residence halls are more than just a collection of individuals. First-year students enter into an environment that is physically different from anything experienced before--more homogenous and more intense. Because of their high need to identify and affiliate with other students, they become very susceptible to the influence of others. Different floors develop different environments depending upon the mix of students and their subsequent interactions. The work of Rudolf Moos is especially important in describing and defining this influence. He sees residence hall floors as having relationship dimensions, personal development dimensions, and system maintenance dimensions which should be taken into account in structuring residence hall environments (Moos, 1979).

Recently, the notion of campus and community has resurfaced, primarily due to the Carnegie Foundation's special report entitled *Campus life: In search of community* (Boyer, 1990.) In that report, Ernest Boyer argues that campus communities must be purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, and celebrative. What better place to start building campus communities based on these concepts than in our residence halls.

- *Know, market, and apply research about residential impact*. We know that residence halls positively affect grades, retention, and personal development. We know less about why this is true, but we do know that certain interventions, programs, staffing patterns, and policies have an impact. For example, as Roger Ballou has pointed out in Chapter 3, how we assign first-year students to residence halls can be very important to their academic and personal development (more on that later). We should follow the research on the reasons for residential impact and apply it to our residential facilities, programs, and services.

  We must also make sure that the "shakers and movers" of our institutions are aware of the benefits of the first-year residential experience. While those of us in residence halls and student affairs know that residence halls are good for new students, faculty and even some upper-level administrators may not. Some faculty still tend to view residence halls as noisy bastions of anti-intellectualism, immorality, and alcohol abuse. And some upper-level administrators only see the fiscal bottom line as important. Both constituencies need to be better informed, based on both national and institutional research, because their support is crucial to resources needed to sustain effective residential environments for students.

- *Focus on developing a residential academic atmosphere*. As Hart has pointed out in Chapter 5, encouraging residence-based academic programming is important to student retention and academic success. Developing an academic atmosphere is much more than establishing and enforcing quiet hours, as important as that is. Sometimes we establish a division of labor that assigns the academic development of new students to the faculty while we in residence halls attend to their personal development. Residence halls exist in an academic context, and thus everything we do must be directly or indirectly related to the academic goals of the institution. The key to enhancing the academic atmosphere in residence halls is faculty involvement. Faculty involvement can include living-in, affiliating with a building or floor, conducting programs in their areas of expertise, or taking meals with residents. Living/learning programs, in which faculty teach classes, advise students, and locate their offices in residence halls, are especially powerful sources of influence upon students.

- *Make creative use of assignment policies*. There are many ways in which we can assign first-year students to enhance their success. In Chapter 3, Ballou has done an excellent review of assignment practices; he reports mixed results and concludes that institutions must look at assigning students by academic major and academic ability and then decide what is feasible given institutional opportunities and constraints. While roommate assignments are critical, there is little evidence that we can predict roommate compatibility in advance. There is agreement that overcrowding students is not a good idea, and if it is done, it should be temporary. In general, coeducational halls are beneficial, but institutions should offer students a choice of living in sex-segregated accommodations.

The debate rages on, however, about halls for first-year students only. At present, there is little evidence either way that can instruct us, and more research needs to be done. While Ballou makes convincing arguments on both sides of this issue, I am still unconvinced that residence halls for first-year students only are a good idea. On the whole, I believe upper-level student influence is positive, and new students should not be deprived of the opportunity to learn from them. Given a choice, I would try to enlist the support of upper-level students to help first-year students in positive ways, rather than trying to block upper-level students' negative influence by isolating them from new students. Upper-level and new students will interact regardless of our efforts to separate them, and I would rather be there to manage that interaction than be isolated from it.

- *Recruit, select, and train resident assistants to focus on first-year students.* I have argued elsewhere (Upcraft & Pilato, 1982) that resident assistants should be trained before they are selected, preferably by an academic course for credit, and that training should include the development of interpersonal skills that apply to the situations RAs face on the job. I have also argued that structured supervision which holds RAs accountable is the key to RA effectiveness. To that argument I would add that RAs should be trained to focus specifically on first-year students, and I agree with Mosier in Chapter 4 that the first six weeks are particularly critical. RAs should know that first-year students are most worried about getting good grades and finding friends and should plan their interpersonal interactions and educational programs accordingly.

- *Use residence halls as a recruitment and orientation resource.* There is great potential for using residence halls to recruit prospective students to the institution and incorporating new student orientation into residence halls as O'Beirne has pointed out in Chapter 2. Residence halls can be a powerful tool in recruiting students particularly if the benefits for first-year students are highlighted. Residence hall programs can focus on typical first-year student adjustment problems, extending orientation beyond the first few days of the semester. An idea which merits more consideration is residentially-based first-year student seminars for credit because of the strong evidence that such seminars enhance first-year student academic success.

- *Focus on diversity.* As I pointed out earlier in this chapter, today's first-year students are more diverse and more troubled than previous generations. We must make sure that our policies and programs are sensitive to the diversity of first-year students and that our staffs are sensitive to their diverse needs. This means hiring both majority and minority residence hall staff who know how to deal with women and minority students and how to help majority students develop tolerant and affirming attitudes towards racial/ethnic minorities, women, and gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons. It also means educational programming which reflects those needs.

Disturbed and disturbing students present quite another problem. While we want residence hall staff to be sensitive to troubled students, we do not expect them to act as therapists. Here the most we can expect is that residence hall staff will be alert to potential pathology and refer to appropriate resources. Since more and more first-year students are bringing more and more problems with them from their previous environments, it is especially important that residence hall staff get to know them very soon. Staff should be especially alert to students from troubled or dysfunctional families.

- *Give greater attention to the "basics."* As I pointed out earlier in this chapter, while we must confront the new, we must not abandon the old. Providing safe, secure affordable, quiet, and well-maintained facilities and delivering quality food services should still be important priorities. It is difficult to focus students' attention on their developmental needs if their facilities and food service are inadequate.

- *Make better use of educational programs.* In Chapter 7, Dude and Hayhurst argued for a strong educational programming emphasis in our residence halls, and I agree. Their distinction among student-development-based, needs-based, and issue-based programming must be planned, not random. As I pointed out earlier when discussing residence hall staffing, first-year student needs during the first six weeks are towards succeeding academically and finding friends. In my opinion, programming during the first six weeks should focus on those two issues.

  There are many examples of residential programming to meet student needs. Hoctor and Roberts-Corb in Chapter 10 argued that decision making and career planning should be an important component of educational programming. In Chapter 8, Zeller made a very convincing case for leadership development in the residential context. And there are many others too numerous to mention. Probably the biggest obstacle to educational programming is the fear that no one will participate. In that regard, it has been my experience that first-year students will come to programs that interest them and that are interestingly presented. Form is more important than substance in early programming for first-year students.

- *Assess, assess, assess!* In Chapter 13, Palmer argued the importance of assessment in residence halls. Every thing we do should be subjected to scrutiny, and set against the standards of student satisfaction, student needs, student participation, and, most importantly, student outcomes. Is there any relationship between what we do with and to first-year students and their subsequent academic success or personal development? While outcome studies are difficult and expensive to do, they should become the primary basis for improving our services and programs for first-year students. But perhaps more importantly, they can provide the evidence we must have to protect and extend our resource base.

Conclusion

I hope this monograph is helpful to those of you who want to make your residence halls better places for first-year students to live, grow, and graduate. While we know a lot more about residence halls than we did 20 years ago, we still need to know a lot more. After more than 27 years in student affairs, 18 of which were spent in residence halls, I still believe our ability to influence first-year students is greatest in the residential environment if only we have the will and the skill to make it happen. Most of what is suggested in this monograph does not require additional resources although they would be welcome. Our challenge is to take whatever resources we do have to make the first-year residence hall experience a good one. Given the importance of the first year of college, we should do no less.

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